

THE NARROW STREET



EDWIN
BATEMAN
MORRIS

15

Miss Jane Hunkel



A Warner Bros. Production

The Narrow Street, Photoplay title Wide Open.

SIMON DISCOVERED THAT DORIS IS HIS EMPLOYER'S
DAUGHTER.

WIDE OPEN

PHOTOPLAY TITLE OF
THE NARROW STREET

BY
EDWIN BATEMAN MORRIS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE
WARNER BROS. PRODUCTION

EDWARD EVERETT HORTON
PATSY RUTH MILLER.



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The Narrow Street

**Manufacturing
Plant
Camden, N. J.**

Made in the U. S. A.

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PART ONE

SNOW

The Narrow Street

CHAPTER I

THE guess of the Weather Bureau stood "Snow to-night." Generally speaking the city disapproved of snow, as interfering with its routine. In fact it felt that winter was an unmetropolitan proceeding, an antiquated occurrence quite appropriate to picturesque early colonial days but to-day outworn in usefulness.

Not that one could say that the hardships of those ancient winters were more trying to human patience than the devices with which and by which the present generation beguiled its leisure. Quite the contrary. The current generation wedged itself into dull moving-picture places, to view, beginning at the centre, the entanglement and climax of some gripping drama for which later they would be furnished the explaining facts,—and were hardly aware of the inversion. With fortitude and patience, likewise, they held their ground through sieges of trained dogs and earnest comedians.

Into the winter evening a cohort of them poured now from a circular structure, once the abode of

a thrilling cyclorama of the battle of Gettysburg and now housing a far less thrilling indoor circus—suspected of an ulterior and nefarious reason for existence. Six young women of no blood kin wearing black—and therefore called the Blanc Sœurs—performed simple acrobatics. Gentle tired lions appeared. There was a white horse and a clown. Seats were hard, art was long and time not fleeting. But, emerging from this trying occasion, the only complaint of the multitude was that the pleasant course of their lives was to be interrupted by the already falling snow.

In the morning they awoke to find the snow a substantial carpet, complained, called for more heat, debated the question of wet feet or ignominious rubbers and reluctantly wore their less impressive clothes into the storm. In a certain English-basement house on the well-established Hewitt Street, Miss Agnes and Miss Albina Caraway drew knitted shawls about thin shoulders and gazed disapprovingly at the weather.

“There is a chill in the house,” said Albina.

“Possibly it would have been wise,” said the sister, guiltily, “to kindle a fire here in the dining-room fireplace.”

But no such weakling Albina. “We never have kindled a fire in this room,” she pronounced, firmly, reprovingly. “It is quite unthinkable to smirch the brick.” Better a cycle of chilliness, in

her upright code, than a single day of smirched brick.

Agnes blushed, huddling into her shawl. An aged maid, in starched white and aristocratic black, adorned a carefully accoutred table with breakfast—two small but properly prepared slivers of bacon, two small but properly browned pieces of toast and a small but healthful pot of a coffee impersonation. The aged maid, napkin on hand, ceremoniously received from Albina the plate containing the important square inch of bacon and ceremoniously delivered it to Agnes—as one might present the Koh-i-noor diamond to a potent sovereign. Likewise the cup of praiseworthy beverage.

Likewise the morning newspaper at Albina's left hand, that she might read aloud, as was her custom, such items as appeared important. Items of general interest, such as "Snow continuing through to-day and to-night," or "Noted steel captain C. P. Faulkner in ill health." Or of local import, as "Women textile strikers in this city, enraged by shipping out of non-union goods, set fire to shipping warehouse. Many injured."

This latter demanded comment from all conservative persons. "Criminal!" announced Albina.

"Uncalled-for," seconded the sister.

The sisters disapproved without process of argument of all collective bargaining, and more especially of such bargaining in their own very city—which was an affront to them—and conducted by women, which was quite indelicate. The whole weight of their private disapproval was therefore thrown against this demonstration as wicked, unmoral, unchristian and lacking in decorum. Without the necessity for debate they were certain that the textile workers were already well cared for.

“Burning buildings! Injuring innocent bystanders!” exclaimed Albina. “Prison is too good for such outrageous offenders!”

Agnes expressed approval of this humane pronouncement. But her less crusading mind wandered. “Isn’t the C. P. Faulkner you have just read about the head of the firm in which Ray Wyeth is employed?”

“I believe he is,” responded Albina, politely.

“And Simon?”

“And Simon?”

They sighed—individually, collectively, en masse. Life places its responsibilities on the shoulders of all. At the moment the aged maid, crackling with starch but otherwise noiseless, entered the room.

“Mr. Wyeth,” she said, in modulated tones.

“Show him up to this room. What a coin-

cidence, Agnes, that we should have just been speaking of him."

The aged maid floated noiselessly down the stair to apprise the visitor of this decision. The sisters approved of Mr. Ray Wyeth because he had such excellent manners. Wyeth approved of the sisters because they would occasionally lend him small sums to tide over arid financial stretches. When one has the evening before encountered a gracious acquiescent lady quite by accident at the intersection of two streets—a lady hungry and athirst, with the name of a handsome, expensive restaurant on the tip of her parched tongue, one found himself financially weak in the morning. It was but natural then that he should strive to think of a piece of conversation worthy of being exchanged for some of the Caraway currency. His mind was not overly clear but there rested in the back of it a morsel of small talk that might make straight the way and wide the gate to financial relief.

"You bring us the news that the great C. P. is indisposed?" asked Albina, graciously.

"I note that you have already learned that. But I am sure his indisposition will not be serious."

"What then! I see by your air that you have news."

"Well, I have. Simon Haldane ——"

The Caraway countenances fell—simultaneously. One's shoulders, bowed down by responsibility ——

"But," they said, immediately, "go on. We can stand anything."

"I know," continued Wyeth, sensing the low key and tuning to it, "that you consider Simon curious, queer ——"

"He is a great trial to us."

"So unconventional. Might I say irrational?" said Agnes.

"Yet his mother was a Caraway. One's own flesh and blood ——" Albina sighed.

"The news ——" continued Wyeth.

"Ah yes. Tell us the worst."

"The news—perhaps I should say it is only a rumor"—he corrected, extenuatingly, knowing that he was selling a slender filament of fact and a wide web of fancy, "is to the effect that Simon is married."

A silence such as follows when one drops a stone down a well and awaits the certain impact.

"*Married!*" the Caraways cried when their breath returned.

"Such is the gossip."

"Well—but—what is it based on?"

"Simon went to Buffalo—presumably to Niagara Falls."

The sisters were stunned by this array of fact.

"But who ——" asked Albina, doubtfully.

"Yes, Albina, who indeed?"

Albina moved her shoulders slightly. "But," she conceded, "why should Simon go to Buffalo?"

"There you are," cried Wyeth.

"It seems," breathed Albina, after a long pause, "too good to be true."

"It will relieve us ——" began Agnes.

"—Of a grave responsibility."

Presently Wyeth was buttoning his overcoat against the storm over a less flat wallet.

CHAPTER II

SIMON HALDANE was looking for his pen.

It might be explained that there existed between Simon and the pen a feud of long standing. The supposedly inanimate stylus, cunningly aware that the brain of its taskmaster was so stuffed with figures that he could not remember where he had put down such a thing as a pen, would, as now, crawl into some obscure cavern beneath the monstrous terminal moraine of papers on his desk.

Resting there it had only to be patient. The taskmaster, busily engaged, presently reached unseeingly toward the spot where it would be convenient to have a pen. His fingers encountering none, he peered in a harassed way at the surface of things and began piling Immediate Attention papers atop of Held for Data papers in the hope of taking the thing in its lair by surprise. This failing he looked in his pockets, behind his ear (where he never kept it) and then in all his pockets again.

“Matter, Simon? Lose something?”

The jungle-hunter paused, mildly annoyed. MacKellar, possessing the power to make him

seem a little more ridiculous than he really was, filled Simon with trepidation. He knew he was somehow queer or different, but to have MacKellar underscoring it . . . However it was no more than polite to answer him.

"Confounded pen," he explained. The others in the office considered it diverting that he should lose his pens and pencils and erasers, and he was conscious of amused eyes turned in his direction. Flushing slightly, he opened a drawer and obtained another pen and holder.

"Now," he observed, brightly, "if I say in a loud tone that I do not need the first one, it will miraculously appear."

MacKellar touched his forehead. "From Brazil."

Miss Mangan, social leader in the office, raised a plucked eyebrow inquiringly.

"He's a nut. Get it?"

The office force burst into pardonable hilarity. Simon, very red, turned helplessly back to his papers. It was as if he were some curious, unusual animal at the zoölogical garden—the yak was the example he always thought of—whose unprepossessing characteristics visitors discussed unreservedly in its presence.

His awkwardness was the sort of thing that magnified itself. If he carried two packages, he seemed to be carrying six. If there was a spec-

tacular inanimate object such as a bottle of ink projecting beyond the edge of a desk, he was certain to brush it to the floor.

He had frequently thought that if they gave him any choice in a future life, he would choose in it not to have any decided characteristics. He would be the sort of being that did one series of things one day and on the next an entirely different series of things. So that no one could ever say, "Isn't that just like Simon Haldane?"

He buried his nose in his work. He liked it—he understood it. The people about him were unapproachable, aloof, strange. But his work was congenial.

It would have been comforting at this moment if his associates were more friendly. He would have liked to discuss with them the presentiment that had clung to him all day. But if he should say to them that he harbored within him the feeling that he was upon the eve of an adventure, it would be for them just one more joke. It was an axiom to them that nothing distantly bordering upon excitement could ever happen to Simon.

Through the window he stared at the falling snow. His unusual feeling of expectation increased. He had not outgrown a childish thrill at the sight of the gently settling flakes. In itself it promised adventure. As the day progressed and the storm continued with a settled

fixity of purpose, a warmth of comfort stole over him.

It gave him a little poise, a little sense of shelter. So that when at closing time his fellow-workers stopped at his desk to let fall a few words of banter, he was somewhat anæsthetized against it.

Even the subject of the terrible Buffalo trip failed to disconcert him to its fullest extent. He had made this trip at his own expense with the over-conscientious idea of learning a little more of the business in which he was engaged by observing the workings of a similar organization. Upon his return he had been horrified to learn that his companions in the office appeared to be convinced that he had been secretly married and had taken his wife on a trip to Niagara Falls. Some statistical support was lent this theory by the fact that an issue of a Buffalo newspaper, sent to the office because the Appalachian advertised therein, announced that among the marriage licenses issued was one to a S. Haldane and a Judith something.

Each effort he made to explain just why he had gone to Buffalo seemed more convulsingly funny to his co-workers. He was certain he was the last person who should be accused of having run away to be married. He seldom spoke to any woman of his own age—and then with fear and

trembling. It was strange how error, once established, would persist.

The snow fell steadily. Outside upon the copings and balustrades it stood finger-deep. Pedestrians were sugared over like crullers. Motors wore thick white crowns. The city was clean, beautiful. Its businesslike machinery and strident noises were shrouded and muffled; it was like a calm forest of trees.

It seemed to Simon that the spell had fallen upon all the crowd of workers pouring into the street. They were grumbling, as is proper for workers, about street-cars. That was automatic. Really they were exhilarated. A girl, coming suddenly around a corner, brushed against him and apologizing laughed companionably, as if they were playing at a game.

That was embarrassing but somehow pleasant to him. There were fellows, of course, who were used to having girls smile at them and who knew just what graceful and telling speech to furnish in return. That was a gift and their lives were full of color and thrill by reason of it. Though such a brilliant existence was not for Simon, he could have joy in a glimpse of it.

He hurried on. He had an annoying duty to perform. In the morning he had rushed from his house carrying two bundles. At a box provided by the corner store for the reception of laundry,

he had inadvertently written his name and address upon his luncheon and dropped it in. This error he had not noticed until at lunch time, consumed with hunger, he had expectantly opened the second package and spread out upon his desk a lavender striped shirt and a flood of collars.

The worst of it was that the office personnel were always expecting just such things from him and had grown quite hysterical over the repast that had appeared from his package.

He had now to deliver the real laundry package. He somehow had a feeling that they would have discovered his error and would smilingly comment upon it. But fortune favored him and he was able to drop it into the box and steal away without being discovered. At the next street corner his Aunt Albina gave him a short lift in her taxi.

His Aunt Albina was one of the people he was fond of. But he was aware that she thought him queer, that when she was with him she spent herself trying to fit together enough words to stretch over the period. She considered it the only way to keep him from bursting forth with his curious ideas. It was humiliating to have one in the family who harbored curious ideas. Simon was not a good listener. From the nature of the sound he knew she was talking and let it go at that. Nor did he know that his aunt, meeting

him face to face had instantly and unflatteringly discarded as improbable an exciting rumor.

"I think," she pattered now, "it was unfair of the officers of the law to seize the lions of this indoor circus, don't you? Even if the circus folk did transport and store intoxicants in lions' cages, where it might be said to be reasonably safe from search, it is questionable whether the officers were right in seizing the lions when the liquor was not actually transported in them. Still, if they had seized the cages and not the lions—— But here! I've taken you by your corner. You haven't told me, however, what new excitement is in your life." The possibility of excitement in his life was a pleasant jest.

He surprised her. "Wait. I have a premonition something is going to happen to-day."

She exclaimed incredulously. "Poor Simon," she said, as the motor moved on, "an adventure in his dear, drab life would be fatal."

He let himself into his little house. All was still and quiet. In that uneventful silence, his expectation of forthcoming adventure grew dim.

CHAPTER III

ONE of his idiosyncrasies was that he lived by himself in a house. The house was in a location not sought after for residential purposes. The street was just wide enough for one vehicle, and if one wished to park the vehicle it was customary to drive it up on the sidewalk to be out of the way of other traffic which might for some unexplained reason desire to use the thoroughfare.

The house was a pleasant place, which he had filled with the necessary pipes and electric wires and painted and garnished. There was a fireplace and a leaded glass window and shelves against the walls for books. From time to time he had given way to impulse in the matter of furniture—Windsor chairs, a gate-legged table, a desk with drawers beneath. Warm weather brought flowers to the small yard and green to the tiny rug of grass. It was home to him, a precious home.

The street was down-town amid the hum of business. He liked to be down-town—to be independent of street railway cars. He disapproved of the street railway car. It was a derivative of the old donjonkeep with none of the latter's con-

veniences. The car was simply a crude breathless cell, while the donjon was a cool spot providing pleasant solitude and freedom to sit or stand or recline. In the car one was attached by the wrist to a high-up strap, surrounded by steaming bodies, wilted by the breeze from hot asphalt, jolted by heavy weights thrown against one or dropped casually upon one's feet. While there was a soothing comfort in being stored away for the rest of one's life in a private little cellar where one would be fed and sheltered from the buffets of life, there was no amelioration in the daily tram-car incarceration, where the warders accepted no responsibility but, after furnishing regulation discomforts, turned their prisoners loose to the hardships of the world.

He had explained this idea carefully to the others in the office and had been discouraged to find that they considered it quite irrational.

A colored woman, pleasantly named Easter, usually came to cook his dinners and to clear away the resulting débris. This night, however, she had not arrived. After waiting nearly an hour, he entered the little kitchen and achieved his own dinner. This he ate on the table before the living-room fireplace. The glow of the logs and the muffled stillness of the snow without filled him with a vague pleasure. Toward the end of the repast a neighbor's child came to bring an offer-

ing of dessert. The boy paused for a moment to expound the virtues of snow and then ran back, ploughing a great furrow through the drift.

Before clearing the table Simon paused for a moment to look at a newspaper. This irksome duty he tried to perform every evening. He read conscientiously through it, getting properly arranged in his mind the boring facts about the politicians, the murderesses and the ladies who were suing for divorce. Recently the paper had largely been given over to the matter of a strike in the textile mills which were the important industry of the city. He had been trying to discover the right and wrong of the controversy, but found only details as to crowds, strike-breakers, window-smashings and general disturbance. The day before a throng of women, finding that one of the mills was shipping out products made by the strike-breakers, had by way of retaliation pushed a burning freight-car into a huge warehouse and set the structure on fire.

The newspaper, uninterested in issues, but deeply absorbed in the heroization of the criminally liable individual, followed avidly the efforts of the police to find and arrest four girls who were the ringleaders in this incendiarism. The score of this little game now stood three captured and one at large, wandering somewhere through the storm.

Simon opened the street door. The yellow light fell on the deep snow. He brought a broom and absently brushed the steps, thinking of the girl trying to evade pursuit in the snow—an unnecessary waste of sympathy and powers of imagination.

"It is a curious thing," he considered, "that one's first idea is always sympathy for the fugitive."

The falling snow brought to his mind the annoying possibility that he had, as frequently, left the window of his bedroom open to the storm. Hastening up the stair he found the window had been left open. A white crescent of snow adorned the floor. As he was clearing up this unsuitable decoration he was surprised by a knock below.

"Easter," he decided. He ran down to open the kitchen door. It was strange too that Easter should knock. She had a key to the yard gate and also to the door.

Opening it he was surprised to find no one there. Thinking possibly the knock had been upon the yard gate he called but received no answer. Possibly it had been the street door. Opening that portal he found no one in sight—save two men half a block away walking in a narrow path through the snow.

The path showed the snow nearly a foot deep.

The flakes continued to fall with a steady silent persistence. All the signs of a big storm. If it continued all night the city in the morning would be a helpless crippled thing. He closed the door and locked it. He was conscious of this, for the reason that frequently he forgot it. In fact it had been unlocked when he came to open it.

He was covering over the fire preparatory to retiring when there was again a knock—this time undoubtedly at the front door. He found two men standing upon the front step. Neither spoke at first, but both looked at him with a disconcerting keenness. At length one of them said:

“We saw the light from your door. May we come in—to get warm.”

The night was not at all cold. But Simon stirred the fire into a blaze. The men seated themselves. They stared at him searchingly. He felt that possibly he had been impolite or had inadvertently stepped upon a visiting foot. Their feet, he thought, were quite large—so large that one, standing at what seemed to be a conservative distance, could at the same time be superimposed upon one of them. He moved a little further away.

The man nearest him suddenly threw back his coat, exposing a nickel badge with a device and a number upon it. “We are police! Plain-clothes men!” he shot out.

Simon glanced dubiously at the badge. "That's all right," he murmured, as though it were a matter soon remedied.

The officers glared, as if to ferret out possible *lese majesty*. But Simon had already embarked upon a diverting tangent of thought—speculating upon the stern pride that is a part of the un-speculative professions of policemen, plumbers and the like. The minions of the law, sensing that here was no guile and very little of the sound sense that an officer needs to make conversation possible, arose. "Let's go," said they.

"Was there anything ——"

"We were hunting a girl. 'Sachet the femme,'" said one, importantly, knowing that this learning would be unintelligible to his auditor.

"If you wish to search."

"No. For us a glance is enough."

They disappeared into the street and grew dim behind the curtain of snow.

"Was that," asked Simon, "my adventure?"

CHAPTER IV

WHEN he arose in the morning, the snow was still falling. It made thick curving buttresses from one side of the window frames to the other. The eaves of the opposite houses had pads of white thatching overhanging perilously. All signs of traffic upon the street below had been obliterated.

He put on his bath-robe and descended two flights of stairs to perform certain rites connected with an upright boiler in the basement, which he shook until the little house tottered slightly upon its foundations. This energetic act apprised the boiler that it was the dawn of another day. On his way up-stairs he paused in the kitchen to light the burner in his stove and put over it a pot of coffee.

All of these things he did mechanically. He would, from that point, have gone mechanically up the second flight of stairs, mechanically have stropped his razor, more or less mechanically have shaved and seeped into his clothes struggling violently the while with some problem connected with the making and marketing of steel sash—until brought from the realm of speculation to

that of reality by the inescapable olfactory conviction that his coffee had boiled dry. But this morning the mechanical motions of his routine were brought to an abrupt end.

When he entered the living-room again he found a woman standing there!

Had he found an anachronistic ichthyosaurus lying on the rug, he would have taken it with a stoical calm. Or the reincarnation of the prophet Jeremiah reading the morning paper.

But this . . . His blood stood still. He aged. He was transplanted. He took bewildered root in a new area—where the impossible happened.

The emergency left him no consciousness of what she looked like. Her disturbing femininity was the only fact that registered upon his mind. Yet he was somehow aware that she was poised—unembarrassed.

Other fellows, men of the world, were, doubtless, accustomed to situations of this sort and knew instinctively what to do. He felt that she was looking at him, pitying his ignorance, his impotence, in this simple social emergency. He put his hand nervously into the pocket of his dressing gown.

She raised her hands above her head. And that smile! It was inevitable that she should be laughing at him. "Don't shoot," she exclaimed.

"I assure you," he said, uncomfortably, "I had no such intention."

In her eyes that terribly disconcerting light—that yak-observing expression. It came to them all. His speeches and acts seemed never to be graceful and sophisticated. There was always some breath-taking flaw.

She sat down immediately on the long sofa by the fireplace. He noted that she had a high color and seemed to be talking very fast—almost nervously. "Heavy fall of snow—what?"

The question mark stirred him into life. "I said nothing."

She made a graceful gesture, spreading out her hands and bringing them together to clasp them just over a cameo pin that lay at her throat. "There would have been no harm if you had."

The orthodox question at this point would have been—Why are you here? But his knowledge of the world was too uncertain to convince him that her presence entitled him to make so inhospitable a query. He avoided therefore, as was usual with him, the obvious move. He was more concerned with his attire. Unaccustomed as he was to receiving ladies in his house, it was embarrassing to be clothed in shuffling slippers and a faded bathrobe.

"I will return," he said, hesitatingly. "If you can—make yourself comfortable ——"

"I'll say! I've performed the feat here all night."

He bowed and went up the stair. He was sorry that his parents had not taught him rhythmic dancing in his youth. He would not have minded then ascending the steps and raising the robe to avoid walking up the front of it.

Rhythmic dancing, he reflected as he stropped his razor, was a simplifying agency in life. The person who was accustomed to appearing before an uncounted multitude attired in two plates and a doily would find life so free from sickening detail. A one-room house with a bed in one corner and a bath-tub in the other would fulfill all his or her requirements. In summer a plum-colored scarf and a bunch of grapes for the hair. No buttons. No belts. No complicated harness to support one's stockings, which would drop down over the shoetops when crossing a crowded thoroughfare, causing one to hobble ignominiously to a safe spot. No——

He paused suddenly in these philosophic reflections. Had the woman down-stairs intimated that she had spent the night in his house?

He rubbed the heel of his thumb against the palm of his other hand. The import of her last speech having now sunk home, no other interpretation could be placed upon it. He was not horrified, not shocked. Rather a glow of excite-

ment suffused him. Here then was the adventure. Here romance. Providence had bestowed thrilling circumstance upon him.

He went down in a confusion of excitement and trepidation. This was not allayed by finding her with a cascade of hair over her shoulders. "Always adjust it in the morning," she said, unembarrassed. "Is there running water in your house or a pump?"

He made a gesture. "The house is simple in plan. If neither of the first two rooms you enter is a bath-room, try the third."

He sat down to think it out. There was but one plausible solution. Storm-staid, unable to make her way home, she must have entered his house as shelter in the emergency. What could be more natural? How she had entered he was uncertain. He thought he remembered locking the front door. But frequently he did not lock it.

He believed that this was not a usual act for a young woman. The average person, he knew, would be critical of such a proceeding. The said A. P. would lay it down as a rule that no woman should ever under any circumstances spend the night in a strange house. But Simon did not propose to be narrow-minded.

He proposed not to be lacking in sympathy. He would assume, until it was definitely established to the contrary, that it was natural that

she should seek shelter in his house from the storm. He even considered the terrifying possibility of taking her out to breakfast. After all breakfast was a simple meal, not requiring great sophistication upon the part of the one who ordered it.

She came running down the stair—a staccato succession of steps—and stood before him looking up from under her lids. He actually looked at her. She was attired in a plain, black dress, cut in a semicircular manner at the neck. Around the neck a string of beads of some coal-like substance. It was not rich attire but attractive. Her white skin showed well against the dark fabric.

“Well,” she twirled the end of the coal necklace in her fingers, “say it.”

Without waiting she crossed to the table and picked up the newspaper that lay there. He marvelled at her unruffled calm, and while he was staring at her found himself suddenly confronted with a disconcerting smile.

“You should point your finger austere-ly at me and say ‘Woman, to what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?’” She illustrated with a gesture, her white arm extended, pleasantly curvilinear. There was a silver band about her wrist, recalling a picture vaguely—something barbaric, an Aztec princess. . . .

"Say it."

He hesitated embarrassed. "Shall I?"

"It's the thing."

He was conscious of his flushed face. Yet here was the thing he wished to know. "Woman," he said, "to what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?"

She clapped her hands. "Splendid. And your blush makes you appear very angry."

He moved uncomfortably. She dropped into a chair. "Honored sir," she began, "this is my story. You will pardon me if I do not fall upon my knees as is customary, but one has to have a special dress for kneeling. You have been reading, I think, about the girls who have been brought here to break the mill strike."

"Yes. The ones who have been—displaced from their boarding-houses."

"Displaced. Yes, that's correct. These strike women—they are Amazons. They throw the baggage of the sc—strike-breakers on the sidewalk. And when the interlopers appear the Amazons make them take what they can find of it and trek."

"And you," he said, bluntly, "are Amazon or ——" He felt her eyes upon him. Her glance had that material property of striking against one like some gently insistent current. He met the glance. Her mouth, he thought, was firm and

decided, like that of the angel with the flaming sword of expulsion. But her eyes were softly brown, dark and deep, like those of Eve expelled.

“How could you ask?” she inquired, in a low tone.

She pointed to a small leather bag. “That is all I have now.”

He felt ashamed of himself. She appeared so friendless. He murmured a half-sentence, inarticulate, sympathetic.

“I found myself alone after dark in the storm. I was desperate. I had no place to go. My overshoes were useless—just two portable puddles. You were my angel of deliverance.”

He had not the symptoms of an angel of deliverance. But there rose in his breast a comfortable feeling, as if he were receiving mention for an act carefully planned. “I was?” he asked.

“You opened the door to sweep the steps. That lovely warm light on the snow. I ran to get here. But you—the angel of deliverance had shut the door. Promise me you will never shut the door again without first looking to see if a lady is running through the snow.”

“Why yes,” he said slowly. It was such a special sort of promise. “Such occurrences do not happen with great frequency. In fact I believe this is the first time a lady has visited the house under just such circumstances.”

She considered him from under her lashes, half smiling, her lower lip caught between white teeth. "Strange," she said, wondering whether this man was wholly serious or whether he had found a flavor of amusement in the idea he had just expressed.

She folded her hands easily in her lap. "I knocked," she went on. "You were at the rear of the house shutting and opening doors. The front door was unlocked and—I speak with remorse—I made unlawful entry and hid my criminal person behind the curtains at the window there."

She rose and threw back the drapery. "I stood upon that broad sill. You remember the famous fugitives of history—Robert Bruce and the others? All I ask concerning them is—how did they avoid sneezing?"

This amused him. But she regarded him seriously. "I felt," she said, reprovingly, "as if I were in one of those Oriental torture cages, which force you to stand up and with which goes an attendant to prod you if you move. At first I thought I was going to have the nerve to come out but—after the policemen—I lost what little I had."

He rubbed the heel of his thumb against the palm of his other hand. Of course she had no reason—being merely an unfortunate person displaced from her lodging—to fear police. Yet if

it appeared that she had reason did his duty as a citizen require him — No. He did not approve of Duties of Citizens. The bystander should not interfere in contests between the police and alleged breakers of the law. Each was a profession in itself.

Besides, the girl who sat before him was an injured person, thrown out into the snow without a place to go.

"I suppose," she said, with a disconcerting effect of following his thoughts, "I could have gone to a hotel. But I had no baggage except that little thing, and also I had no —"

"I understand." Simon's sympathy was abnormally close to the surface. Deep brown eyes are of course a stimulus to that sort of thing. But deep brown or otherwise, he offered her a ready allegiance that had not been misshapen by any belief that the world is all guile.

"Thank you. To-day," she said, "I shall have all day to find a place."

"You have had a hard time. Weren't you—last night—very wet?"

"You said it. After you had gone up-stairs, I laid another log on the fire and put myself on to boil."

It was strange. A girl homeless in an unknown city, who found herself compelled to seek the first open door for shelter. Why was it not generally

known that such things were happening? "You should have let me make you comfortable," he said.

He felt her eyes upon him and looked, to find them bright—disconcerting. "You are very kind."

It was seldom that anyone spoke appreciation to him—seldom that the quality in him which commanded attention was favorable. He was kind, she said. A warm surge of blood moved through him. He experienced the thrill of possessing a point of contact though small with another being.

In the glow of this he was emboldened to suggest that they fare forth in search of breakfast. She moved toward the chair where lay her coat. He noted as he held it that it was a plain coat—too thin for winter. But, in spite of the plainness of her clothes, there was a certain distinction about her. He could not quite explain it. But he remembered having once heard a man who claimed to know say that a work of art was a thing you would think of again—that had a haunting quality. Having seen this girl one would certainly think of her again.

Frequently he had stooped to put on his Aunt Albina's rubbers for her. On such occasions he had experienced no feeling except a slight discomfort in the back. As he bent over now, however,

to slip the waterproofing over this new foot, he was possessed with an unexplained sense of elation.

The snow was drifted across the steps. The undulating plane of it stretched away in both directions, untouched, as smooth as the icing on a cake. A tiny hillock showed the location of the fire hydrant, nearly obliterated now.

He plunged down to the sidewalk. The snow was above his knees. Walking was like struggling against the weight of a swiftly running stream. "Why," he exclaimed, suddenly, "you couldn't walk in this."

"No," she replied mildly.

He had an uncomfortable feeling that she had foreseen that it would not be possible to leave until the drifts had been broken a little by more venturesome pedestrians, and was chagrined that his supposedly superior masculine perspicuity had not foreseen it for her. He reascended the steps. Of course it would be quite improper for her to stay to breakfast in his house. And yet—since she was storm-staid and could not leave—there must be some obscure corollary to the conventions which would permit him to feed her. It was a perplexing question. Why didn't someone publish an exact book on the matter of proper social procedure, with an alphabetical index, so that one needn't flounder around?

She wrinkled her nose, sniffing the atmosphere. "Do you always roast your own coffee?" she asked.

He returned abruptly to consciousness. His olfactory nerve apprised him of the fact that the morning beverage had been boiling now for something over an hour.

CHAPTER V

SIMON perceived that this was the adventure.

A guest had never before graced his table. The fact that the initial guest was a young woman, even though an uncertain, unknown young woman (or possibly because of that) provided the necessary thrill which fulfilled his premonition. The even beating of his heart took on an unaccustomed acceleration. His usually absent eye focussed now on the picture at hand.

It was with not a little bewilderment he heard the unaccustomed click of feminine heels upon his kitchen floor. When she took a clean white apron that Easter had ready for use and dropped it over her head, making ready to assist in the preparation of a meal at his house, a maximum of pleasurable confusion possessed him. When she opened the door of his cupboard and the sleeve of her gown fell away toward her shoulder the unusual whiteness of such an arm reaching to that cupboard made him feel strongly the excitation of the moment.

Between them they got up steam again in the little coffee-pot and assumed a threatening attitude toward a group of eggs. "You lika the scrambla eggs?" she inquired, deferentially.

It was strange that she had but to look at him in that unusual manner, impudently garbling the mother tongue, and he was amused. Someone ought to write a book about the curious and illogical things that divert the human being.

As they sat down at the table in the living-room beside a bright fire, a figure passed the window ploughing through the snow. "My neighbor, Mr. Christian," Simon explained, diffidently. "He is a chef in a small hotel not far from here. The social tone of my street, you see, is rather modest."

They heard the sound of a shovel striking metallicly against pavement and discovered another neighbor breaking a thin, deep trail. "Mr. Brown," Simon pointed out. "He plays the piano at a moving-picture place. I shall help him after breakfast."

"Play the piano?"

"No, no. With the snow," he corrected, confused.

"Perhaps," she said, hopefully, "he will have finished it by then."

Simon thought the breakfast unusually good. The aroma and flavor of the coffee were surpassing. The eggs were pleasing in color and delicate to the taste. The toast was crisp and yellow-brown. It was like his standard breakfast, yet somehow his power of appreciation had increased.

She ate with a zest. He suspected that she had had no dinner the night before. Yet possibly it was merely the normal, healthy appetite of one in her strata of the world. What a contradiction she was. The argot of the mill cropping out through good English—the imitative English for company purposes. Carefully censored table manners masking a ravenous eagerness.

“I was hungry,” she said, finally.

“Thank you,” he thought to say.

“How polite you are. That was it,” she whispered. “I was not really hungry. I was merely eating to compliment your breakfast.”

He was much annoyed when the pleasant ceremony was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone bell.

He maintained a telephone as a necessary inconvenience. Telephone conversations terrified him. People at the other end intoning long speeches, through which he could occasionally discern English words. At the conclusion of these speeches he was nervous lest a mere “Yes” or “No” might not be acceptable, or lest the speaker had asked him to perform some definite act at some definite time.

On this occasion the voice was the voice of Wyeth, the assistant chief at his office, who in the absence of Mr. Trundle the chief was in temporary charge. In a still sleepy voice Wyeth re-

quested him to go to the office as soon as possible. He was the nearest and the complete tie-up of the street-cars made it impossible for the others to get there. The important matter was to put in shape and mail a certain estimate. Simon could hear a luxurious unloading of care in Wyeth's cheerful farewell.

"Needn't have called me," he thought. "I knew the thing had to be mailed."

His guest, having followed the conversation, stood up. "If there were a taxicab or something for me ——" she suggested.

She added that she feared no taxicabs would be yet running. Unable to make any conjecture upon that point, he at length decided to go out and investigate conditions.

Simon's humble street (which by reason of its one block of length and its six feet of width was called by the euphonious title of Charlemagne Place) was of little importance as a thoroughfare. With the exception of the narrow trail cut by the public-spirited pianist, it was a trackless canyon. At Severn Street, the thoroughfare to which it was tributary, he stared east and west through a wider canyon, along which the machinery of civilization was enveloped in drift. An endless queue of bewildered citizens plodded patiently, or with forced gaiety, or glumly, according to their natures, down the middle of it, viewing resent-

fully the spotless ermine mantle that made the grimy highway for once lovely.

The car-track was a wide ditch, showing nakedly two lines of steel. In the distance a street-car moving slowly. Automobiles came, arrogantly driving down the ditch, packing unwelcome snow on the track, reminding pedestrians by a touch of the horn of their duty to step from the track to the deeper snow. Gaudy colors marked taxicabs, apparently reaping a rich harvest.

Simon returned to the house. It would be easy for the girl to walk to the corner, where a taxicab could be ordered to meet her.

"Are you—have you enough money?"

"I have twenty bucks," she informed him, "That's plenty until I can get a job—or leave town."

It developed that she had no definite place to go. "One of the ladies at the office," suggested Simon, "goes to the Young Women's Christian Association when she is looking for a room. If you had the taxi take you there first, you ——" He saw that this met some obstacle in her mind.

"Or—I could telephone." She appeared grateful for this offer and over the wire he obtained the addresses of two approved boarding-houses. The taxicab stands, however, yielded less satisfactory information. They all told the same story. Their machines were out on the streets and, in

this emergency, the only way to obtain one was to wait on the street until one appeared that was not engaged. This would be less difficult later when the rush to the offices was over.

"But," she said, "you must leave immediately."

"That will make no difference," he said firmly. "You will of course stay here until later." He knew from her quick glance that she was thinking that he was not prudent. A more level-headed citizen would have hesitated before permitting a stranger to stay there alone. But he did not intend to subject himself to the annoyance of being a level-headed citizen.

"If I happen to find an automobile I will telephone," he said.

She held out her hand. He was lost for a moment to the world as the deep eyes lifted to his. "You have been kind to me. I shall always remember."

That was something to think of. And the brown eyes! He strove to see if there was in them the tolerant amusement he so frequently found in the eyes of persons who addressed him. But these were friendly. And, carrying the words with him, he trudged jauntily through the snow. "I shall always remember."

When however he was too far on his way to turn back, he realized that he had not asked her name.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN he had gone she went quickly to the street windows and pulled down the shades.

She stood for a moment before the fire, holding the pleasantly white fingers to its heat. She wore but two rings—a plain gold band and a somewhat masculine ring set with an amethyst—both on the ring finger of her right hand.

On the table lay the paper Simon had brought the night before. She picked it up and, dropping to the sofa with a delicious sense of relaxation, began a careful study of the sheet. She noted each item upon every page, stopping to read a little of such of them as were not definitely eliminated by their captions as having no bearing upon the matter for which she searched. At length she let the sheet fall to the floor.

For a long time she lay staring, with unnoticing eyes, at the varying tones of the unevenly plastered ceiling. A frown fell like a shadow upon the serene face. Her lower lip, to facilitate cogitation, was caught between her teeth. At length she made an impatient gesture, as if casting some impossible problem from her, and lay again relaxed.

Her eyes closed. A luxurious restfulness flowed

through her. The room grew silent. The drops and scenery of the world moved out of her ken. The striking of the sharp-tongued clock over the mantel, the falling of spent logs in the fireplace, the rumbling of shifting snow on near-by roofs, was not for her. The newly awakened sun, drawing its arc upon the floor, carried to her eye no message.

The sharp-tongued clock struck again. She still slept.

At length she moved impatiently, as if resisting some outside influence that dragged her back to consciousness. Suddenly the whole enshrouding curtain rent and fell away. There was the room, the uneven ceiling, the drawn curtains, the dim fire. A moment of bewilderment. She jumped frightened to her feet. Something had happened.

But the room was still, the door shut, everything as it was. But again the same noise of which she had been distantly aware. It was the bell of the telephone violently ringing.

He had said he would call her. Still bewildered and but half awake, she looked in surprise at the clock to find that she had been asleep for two hours. She lifted the receiver.

"Hello yourself," she said, aggressively.

A strange voice said, "Is Mr. Haldane there?"

She raised her hand apprehensively to her lips.

"He has gone to his office."

"Good. To whom am I talking?"

She made a grimace. "His maid—Easter."

An irritating laugh. "Hardly."

She maintained a vexed silence.

"I simply wanted to know if he had gone," continued the voice. "This is Mr. Wyeth."

She hung up the receiver resentfully. Looking out through the rear window she found it was commanded by the windows of the tall office building that frowned down abstractedly upon the acre of small structures cluttering the ground at its important feet. A head moved quickly away from one of these openings as she looked. She had a feeling that she was being spied upon. The telephone call and the possible observer annoyed her. The sooner now she left the house the better. She put on her hat and the heavily-meshed veil which served partially to obscure her features.

She noted that her face was flushed and her skin hot. "I feel almost as if I had a fever," she said.

She put on the inadequate overshoes. After a final glance about, she threw the front door abruptly open. The street in either direction was deserted. With mingled feelings of relief and apprehension, she shut the door behind her, definitely and finally closing the interior to her.

At that moment a man entered the street from Severn Street.

For an instant fear unsteadied her. There was

but the one broken path and that led toward him. As she approached him she pushed up the dark veil over the upper part of her face and made a pretence of touching her mouth with her handkerchief, thus effectually hiding her features.

The man stood aside in the snow scarcely seeming to see her.

CHAPTER VII

SIMON trudged down the cleared track on Severn Street in company with a bewildered line of pedestrians, who, unable to break away from habit, pursued on foot the same route they were accustomed to traverse by street-car. With a pathetic incredulity they gazed at the silent stratum of snow which had the terrific power thus to derange the methodic routine of their day.

The city had dropped back into mediæval times. The rich rode their gasoline chargers down the middle of the way and the yeoman populace walked, occupying such portions of the thoroughfare as the mounted barons did not require. The sidewalk, the coming of which had marked the end of feudalism, had disappeared. The newsboy, the index of modern civilization, had not arrived. Fruit and flower vendors were years in the future.

It was almost with surprise Simon found an elevator running in his office-building. It seemed out of key for a piece of mechanism to be operating. He purchased a newspaper from a damsel in the lobby, who smiled at him and said, "Still keeps sultry!" Instead of nodding and turning

away with averted glance, he looked at her squarely and smiled too. It would not do for her to continue to suppose that he was unaccustomed to conversing—even breakfasting—with young women.

Standing in the centre of the lobby was a plump prosperous person, whom new arrivals addressed as "Good-morning, Mr. Concannon." Simon knew from this that he was the generalissimo who directed the affairs of the obelisk in which the offices of the Appalachian Steel Products Company were located, collecting tributes, laying down rules, soothing the mighty, overriding the meek and lowly, a smile of iron covering a soul of vinegar—that incomprehensible thing, a pushing business man. The main feature of news in the paper was the information that it had snowed for eighteen hours, which was a piece of knowledge already quite generally broadcast. The public utilities, the sheet explained, were temporarily discontinued. Although it had been impossible to keep this fact secret, he saw everyone reading about it with avidity. The storm, said the paper, was the worst in twenty years.

"The number of these worst-in-twenty-years storms increases every year," ventured Simon, in the elevator.

The passengers glanced uneasily about. "Very bad storm," pronounced a florid gentleman, se-

verely, staring at the citizen who questioned the veracity of the public prints in an emergency of this sort. The others agreed indignantly. One can ridicule the average man's business, his government, his religion—but it is insulting to minimize his weather.

Simon unlocked the main door of the string of offices marked "Appalachian Steel Products Company" and passed through the reception room past the head office and conference rooms to the long general office. The place was deserted. All its machinery—the switchboard, the telephones on the desks, the batteries of ivory push-buttons on the desks for summoning vassals and retainers, the ranks of filing cases symbolic of knowledge, system, organization—were majestic in their inaction. They suggested power and strength. Simon, though knowing from long association their every twist and turn, could not lose his awe for the organization for which they were the sinews of war.

He was not alone in that. The Appalachian was viewed as a powerful, rich company. The dynamic personality of its founder and head, C. P. Faulkner, had made it so. The business was now but one of his many interests. But it was his first and his best known.

Faulkner was his own natural-born publicity agent. He made good Sunday-supplement ma-

terial. His rugged likeness in a newspaper was recognizable at a distance. His acts were big, spectacular.

His first venture, of which the Appalachian was now the mammoth result, was unspectacular in itself. It was the exploitation of a steel sash and frame. But in that steel sash, he saw a vision. He saw light and sun in great structures. He saw acres of glass with a minimum of structural support. He saw cubic miles of out-of-doors roofed and still retaining its air and daylight. He again brought forth and stressed the words "factory conditions." And, while he was building up a towering business, he produced for himself, as a by-product, a reputation as a forerunner, an advocist and a philanthropist.

Nothing could have been more distasteful to him than expending effort to become a philanthropist. But he had the business man's delight in discovering a widespread want and in making an abundance of money by supplying that want. Being hailed as a public benefactor—while humiliating—nevertheless provided valuable publicity.

Simon was proud of his connection with an enterprise of Faulkner's. Faulkner appealed to the sentimental in him. Seated in the sheltered quiet of his own house, Simon was an adventurer. Dreams of spectacular accomplishments were

pleasant to him. The spectacular accomplishments of old Faulkner he devoured with avidity and derived from them a vicarious gratification.

When the great man had been crushed by the sudden death of his wife, it had been a sharp grief to Simon too. He often pictured old C. P. sitting in his high-vaulted library amidst his material treasures fighting his great fight. It was a conflict in which even his attachment to his only child—a daughter who, as wilful as he, was his only confidant—failed to allay or soothe.

Simon was this morning less the humble worshipper of the Faulkner machine and more the responsible cog in its mechanism. He felt in him a certain buoyancy. His encounter of the morning had made him conscious of an unaccustomed power in his hand.

He seated himself at his desk. The estimate concerning which Wyeth had telephoned was for steel sash on a group of industrial buildings somewhere in Kansas. "No use getting excited over that," Simon said, resentfully. "Wyeth knows we can't pay that freight and compete with the others."

He shuffled a sheaf of calculations. The Apalachian needed the business. If he could find a way to cut the price that no other bidder would think of — He leaned back in his chair. There

was a way. But it meant breaking a fundamental rule of the company.

The prospect was tempting. Astonished at his own temerity, he kept revolving the matter in his mind. If he called up Wyeth, Wyeth would veto the proposition on general principles. Yet if the bid were high the breaking of the rule would make no difference. If it were low, at least the company would have the chance to accept the business if they so desired. The substance of the matter was that the Appalachian required estimates to be exactly upon the specifications submitted. It was undignified to offer a corollary to any bid saying that if the owner would make certain modifications certain reductions in price could be obtained.

Simon, who read and listened extensively, believed, sitting at his uneventful desk, that the old dignified mollusc type of commercial organization was disappearing. One did not wait now, fastened to a rock-like reputation, for the tide to wash in business.

The thing which was responsible for cornering Simon—now in momentary charge of the office—between the horns of a dilemma was the fact that the Appalachian Company had in storage an appalling quantity of sash and frames which had been charged off as an absolute loss. They were of a special size and type, ordered during

the war by a sprouting munitions company which had withered into bankruptcy after the armistice and left the sash unused and unpaid for.

Simon had noted that, by accepting a slight reduction in glass area, the owners of the group for which he was now assembling the estimate could use these discarded sash. The Appalachian could on this basis reduce their bid twenty-five thousand dollars.

Nell Mangan, Mr. Trundle's favored stenographer, swept into the office, large overshoes flapping around silk legs, fur coat above and ultimately a red hat. What was the use of hesitating, he thought, when one was right? "Will you take a letter for me?"

She sat down beside him with her note-book. He burned his bridges. To the regulation bid, he dictated the supplementary proposal to reduce it twenty-five thousand dollars.

"Wow," said Nell, recognizing this innovation.

Simon poked his pencil uncomfortably into the blotter before him. "Once in a while," he muttered, "you have to do what you think is right."

"Something has come over you," she said; "you are bull-doggy."

He remembered that he had promised to call up his house on the telephone. He gave the number but there was no answer.

"Several times this morning there has been a

buzzing sound at this switchboard, Miss Mangan."

"Someone trying to call you."

Perhaps the lady he had left at his house had tried to telephone to him. He found he was sorry.

CHAPTER VIII

JUST before noon there was another arrival. Fulford, a files clerk, burst in with a smiling air of expectancy. Fulford was always expectant. He was a direct descendant of Aladdin. While lacking the imagination to dream that a genii would ever appear out of thin air to fetch him an automobile or an English basement residence, he had the perennial impression that Luck was just about to furnish him with something greatly to his advantage.

Nell snapped the sheets out of her typewriter. "Hello, big boy. What do you know?"

"I'm gloomy. Yesterday the whole list looked overbought. Trend seemed down. I closed out and went short. But what do I find this A. M.? All strong—new highs. Wouldn't that crimp you?"

Simon turned round. "What is that gibberish, Miss Mangan?"

"He says he's bearish in a bull market."

"That," he pursued, "has something to do with the stock market?"

"It's the history of the stock market."

Simon leaned back in his chair. "I can't see why a man with an average income should feel justified in expending a thousand, possibly two thousand, dollars for a stock he hasn't any use for when he gets it."

Fulford stared at him pityingly. "It takes long training, Simon, to understand. A fellow has to have insight and patience." He leaned forward eagerly. "Take the case of Texas Imperial Valley. A dozen men I know had it and, when the drop came they sold out at a loss. I'm holding on."

"But," said Simon, simply, "the Imperial Valley is not in Texas."

"This is a railroad, you prune. The Texas and Imperial Valley Railroad, which went into the hands of the receivers a few years ago. Oil was discovered on a tract of land owned by the railroad. I had the foresight to buy some of the stock. In three weeks' time, my dear sir, I had fifteen points profit. Fifteen points!"

The other endeavored to be impressed. "What," he asked, politely, "is the approximate value of a point in American currency?"

"It's a dollar," Fulford snorted indignantly.

"I see. It wouldn't do to say a dollar, of course."

The stock operator made an impatient gesture. "And what happens," he demanded, "just

as I am about to make a big profit? The lower courts decide that the oil land doesn't belong to the railroad! Defective title. Drives the stock down to almost nothing."

Nell rattled a sheaf of papers pointedly. "Come, cherry, don't park here any longer. This is a busy avenue. I gotta get a piece of business done."

Fulford rose from her desk. "All right," he said, "but the Supreme Court of the U-nited States is going to reverse that decision. Hear me."

When Simon emerged at the close of business, he found at every corner knots of people who interspersed patient waiting with impatient rushing off to other street-corners to see if other street-cars were running. When a car did appear it would be unbelievably filled—yet not so filled that half a dozen others could not find space where there was no space to climb aboard. Simon was sure they must all find themselves at the end of their journeys much taller and thinner from lateral compression.

He plodded on. At the entrance to Charlemagne Place he discovered an automobile parked in the snow. Its sleek body, ostentatious and shiny, was somehow vaguely familiar. In a moment he met Dr. Saul in the narrow footway and

realized the motor belonged to him—for he had long ago decided that the doctor's motor had the assumacy and loud-speaking qualities of the doctor himself.

Saul was of tiny stature. His smallness and his immaculate attire gave him the grotesque effect of an old-faced child dressed in mature clothes. He affected a swagger—a gesture of announcement that in spite of his undersize he was a man of the world.

Simon felt no flow of congeniality toward him, and the doctor had harbored for Simon a deep contempt since the day when the latter, visiting him to have his vaccination inspected, had inadvertently rolled up the sleeve of the wrong arm. That had pigeonholed Simon. The physician had no use for anyone except the wide-awake fellows, the men-about-town.

“How-do, Haldane,” he said, passing by.

“Someone sick?”

Saul gave a backward jerk to his head. “Brown's child. Tonsilitis. Running a temperature. Ought to have them out.” And passed on.

That, conjectured Simon, would mean the youngest child. He paused uncertainly. If he called at the house, what could he say? Yet there might be a prescription he could take to the pharmacy. Mrs. Brown, answering his ring

herself, said that the child had a high fever, giving a figure which he could not remember.

"Could I," he asked, "take the prescription?"

But there was none. "The doctor will return at eight. Perhaps then. He's quite ill," she added, reaching out for comfort.

Her worried look disturbed him. If he had only known what to do to help. He returned to his house dejected.

The house, with its drawn shades, was dark. His footsteps echoed on the stair. In the kitchen, when he accidentally brushed a knife from the table, the sound of it in the still room startled him. He had never noticed the stillness before. He had an oppressed sense of being alone.

Loneliness was a thing that had always been pleasant to him. Doubtless now he was disturbed by the worry in the eyes of the child's mother. Little things like that did throw one's spirit out of tune. One could not view unhappiness and still be content. That was the reason for his depression.

He walked into the living-room. Had she, he wondered, left a note for him?

PART TWO
THE HANGING OF THE CRANE

CHAPTER I

THERE was no message from his guest of the morning. In fact, the house showed no sign nor reminder of her visit—no book nor chair out of place, no handkerchief lying on the floor, none of the faint reminiscent perfume of which the books speak. The whole matter was as a nicely flavored dream.

He returned to his kitchen. He wished that Easter would come. He did not want to prepare food. He had a picture in his mind of an old man—one of the characters of his youth—who shuffled about in carpet-slippers, collarless, suspenders hanging, living alone, cooking his food in a grimy kitchen. Simon did not want to be that sort of person.

He set his table with scrupulous care. There was a certain cheerfulness about the clean linen. The blaze in the fireplace was companionable. It was like another person in the room.

His depression passed on. The odor of food, the aroma of coffee, cheered him. He sat down expectantly within the warm caress of the fire, opened a wide book before him, rearranging the

dishes to give it its proper upstage position and lost himself in the magic of bodily and mental food.

Lost himself—followed abstractedly the lure of the printed page, punctuating its sentences and paragraphs with attention to dinner, yet breaking no thread of interest.

It was his customary relaxation. Blocks of print for companionship! He had bought the volumes of Latham's *Gardens of Italy*—through whose majestic pages he gleaned the gossip of the Renaissance. The news and headline stories of the Sixteenth Century, the belated whisper from piano nobile and ilex-bordered garden thrilled him where similar gossip blacktyped in his newspaper failed to stir.

The notorious Olympia! Olympia Impia, they called her. A broad-shouldered, full-chested female—avaricious, certain what she wanted, yet, like her name, majestic. He would have liked to be majestic, a person of force.

People, he thought, grew to be like their names. His own held a sinister influence over him. Men hearing it associated it with eccentricity, an unbalanced mind, and clapped the implication upon him. Olympia—strong, powerful! Simon—simple, ridiculous!

For a long while the Semitic sound of it had annoyed him—since he was not of that race. It

had been comforting to know that its derivation was Greek. It was not altogether satisfactory to reflect that the root meant *flatnosed* but at least that meaning relieved it of its racial implication.

Its Greek derivation lent it a dignity, a firmness, a normalcy. He would write it sometimes in its Attic characters. *Σιμων*. The solidity, the poise of it buoyed him up—until the next clash with the scoffers.

He was in some ways like the great carrier of that name. Uneven of temperament, while frail self-hypnotism ruled him, he walked safely upon the waters of assurance. But when confronted by the harsh criticism that came inevitably to him, his too sensitive soul buoyed him up not long. What one needed in the world was not so much mental power as ruggedness, hard knuckles, the teeth of a bulldog —

A sudden knock at the door. He brought his mind slowly back to focus. Ah, yes. This would be Easter. "Come in," he said, searching again for his place in the book.

No movement. Another knock. He rose, wondering. His hand on the knob, the door open wide. The warm light empurpling the snow. On the steps a dark figure.

He should have been surprised. Yet somehow it seemed merely natural, as if all along he had known it was going to happen. She said not a

word. With every appearance of weariness, she dropped into a chair and let her head rest against the back of it. He moved her chair into the radius of the fire. She smiled faintly and, reaching to her hat and veil, let them fall upon the floor.

“My overshoes.”

He should have thought of that. As he bent over he noted that shoes and stockings were wet. “Yes,” as if he had asked the question, “the shoes too.”

She held stockinged feet embarrassingly before the blaze. The heat of the fire and of a cup of tea which presently he brought her restored some of the sparkle to her eyes.

“You are wondering what it is all about.”

“Later. You are tired now.”

She opened the eyes wide. “But,” she murmured, “like all women—it rests me to talk.”

He waited. She held the coal necklace thoughtfully against her lips. “When I went out this morning to hail an unoccupied taxi,” she began, “there was no such animal.”

He made a gesture. “That’s the way I felt too—after the first hour,” she agreed. “Finally I got on a street-car. At least it would vary the monotony. I disembarked at a spot called Alamo Avenue.”

"Not very good."

"I'll say not. I walked. Then I walked some more. I did find one of my addresses, but the woman had no room for me."

"The housing situation is acute," learnedly.

"Sweet *daddy!*" she concurred. "This woman directed me to two other places—which proved to be duds. While I was debating what to do next, a man came skidding over the snow in a flivver. On the windshield was the information 'Tel Opp.' He hailed me."

Simon expressed curiosity. "The man was patrolling the town picking up telephone operators who were blockaded by the storm. He took me for one. I said, 'Don't you see my hair isn't bobbed?' But he gave me a lift anyway. On the way I told him my story and showed him my remaining address. He stopped at a drug-store and, while all the little operators waited on the street-corners in the snow, he gleaned the information that the house next-door to the address I had showed him possessed a telephone and in this manner he found that there was a room for me.

"Good," he said.

"But the place was a long way off. It was dark and I did not want to be out alone at night. There was nothing to do but to come here to ask you to go with me. I'm sorry."

"Of course I'll go," he exclaimed, earnestly. "But, first of all there must be some food for you."

She raised the hand in her lap—without moving her arm. "No food. Thank you. I couldn't."

He noticed, as she rose to her feet, that she looked pale—and tired. "The address," she said, "is here in my pocketbook ——"

She took a step, paused, grasped strangely at the air beside her and fell backward.

It was a strained moment. Fortunately he was close to her. He reached out instinctively and caught the dead weight of her as she fell. Astonished, dazed, he stood uncertainly holding her.

The closed eyes, the lifeless pressure of her body against his arm frightened him. He moved, lowered her to the couch. While she rested inertly there, he ran for a glass of water. His experience with persons fainting was too limited to make this act the result of perception as to what the emergency needed, but he was certain that in such cases water was always called for. Whether to be applied externally or otherwise he was not sure.

While he was doubtfully holding the glass aloft, debating the advisability of cascading it over her, she as if sensing the emergency opened her eyes.

"What are you doing with that?" she murmured.

He stayed his hand. "I was about—to bring you to."

"I'm to." And closed her eyes again.

In a moment she sat up, a little dazed, her hands involuntarily arranging her hair.

"The world slipped away from me. I shall be ready to go in a minute." She stood up, groping as if to steady herself against the thin air. She drooped to the couch.

"You're ill," he said, worried.

There was a shawl beside her. She drew it about her, shivering. "I'm cold. My teeth chatter. A moment ago I was burning up."

The first impulse of one who had had little experience with illness was to turn back to the book of his childhood, where the therapeutic resource consisted of flaxseed tea, onion plasters, hot foot-baths and certain decoctions whose ill-taste gave rise to the belief that they would have a beneficial effect upon the digestive tract. Of these but one was convenient or possible. Even that was difficult. But in this emergency——

"For chills and fever," he began, "my mother used to recommend hot mustard in water—I mean rather," he fumbled, "hot water in mustard—applied to the feet." He was red with confusion.

"Please hurry," she murmured. "Anything hot."

There was on the stove water heating. He

transferred it to a suitable receptacle and, placing it before her, retreated precipitously. In the seclusion of the kitchen he mopped his brow. "This is a matter," he thought, "that calls for infinite tact. If I had Aunt Albina here!"

The conviction evolved itself in his mind that obviously she could not go out into the snow that night. The situation was puzzling. What would she consider he ought to advise her to do? He did not want to make an absurd plan. There was but one accepted sequence of treatment in the case of a mustard foot-bath. He paced the floor distractedly. Finally he clenched his teeth in decision. The matter required courage.

At the end of fifteen minutes he entered, bearing a robe and slippers. "You will go to bed now," he announced. "I have put blankets on the front room bed. And there is the—necessary attire."

She flashed a glance at him, accompanied by a fleeting wrinkling at the corners of her eyes, and departed meekly. When she had gone, he called his Aunt Albina on the telephone. That is to say, he gave the necessary number, but received the information that the storm had put her telephone out of commission.

What then? One could not stay in the house under the circumstances. His thought was that he could go for Easter. He was only vaguely

aware of Easter's place of abode, but someone could tell him. She could take care of the young woman, while he went to a hotel.

He must explain this. Terribly embarrassed, he waited a long while and, setting his lips, marched up the stair. He delivered several flannel knocks on the door and, receiving no answer, entered softly. She was lying very still, in the manner of one who, after days of hard travel, has at last found a haven of rest.

CHAPTER II

THERE was a dizzying intimacy about it—the clothes neatly piled on the chair with the dress accurately and concealingly folded above them, the shoes under the bed, the reinforcing articles for one's hair on the bureau.

She opened her eyes. "I left my rings on the lavatory. Would you mind getting them for me?"

There were two rings—a plain gold band and an amethyst seal ring. "The plain ring was my grandmother's wedding-ring," she said, without opening her eyes. "My mother wore it until she died."

He put them on the bureau beside the articles for the hair. "Now you must go," she murmured. "I'm so tired. If I die I want to die rested."

He explained that he was going to get someone and moved quietly from the room. Possibly her reference to dying was too flippant. Yet if one were about to die it was only reasonable to want to be rested first. The matter troubled him. Of course she was not going to die. But if she should be contracting a serious illness for which something immediate and arresting should be done, the

blame for delay would rest with him. He wished that she had not spoken of dying. The sound of the word unnerved him.

It was worrying to have upon one's shoulders the responsibility for a matter like this, in which one had had no experience. Pneumonia and Spanish influenza were things that resulted from continuous exposure.

Why had the storm picked out his Aunt Albina's telephone to render useless?

The clock on the mantel struck eight. He stared at it, remembering that he had fixed upon his mind something that was to happen at eight o'clock. He was accustomed to assist his memory by agreeing to do a certain thing when the clock struck a certain hour.

He remembered now. It was the hour the doctor was to come to see the little Brown child. He had promised to call to see if there was anything he could do to help.

That was an obligation. He put on his coat and hat. At Browns' door he found Dr. Saul descending the steps—rich-appearing in fur-lined coat and expensive shin-high shoes.

"How's the child?" whispered Simon.

Saul disapproved of bedside whispering. It was mid-Victorian, out-of-date. "The child is in no danger," he replied, in a rebukingly loud voice. "Nothing but a seasonable cold." As if it were

something sent by Providence in the interests of physicians and of no concern to the layman.

"Is there anything I can do? Any prescription?"

"No," exclaimed the doctor, with professional impatience. "Don't bother them now. Let them rest."

Obediently Simon followed down the street. At his own doorway he made a decision. In this matter it was his duty not to run risks.

"Dr. Saul," he said.

"Yes," returned the other, striding ahead.

"I should like to have your professional advice."

The little man wheeled about. Quite a different proposition was presented now. "What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing. But I have a—a lady in my house who ——"

Saul fixed him with a cold eye. "A what?"

"A—lady."

"Well, well," said the doctor, under his breath.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Lead on, Mr. Haldane. I am at your service." He followed Simon into the house. The little fur coat he laid, precisely folded, upon the couch, glanced critically about and ascended the stair.

The young woman was asleep. The brown hair lay fluffed against the pillow. The rounded lips

were parted slightly. The closed lids lay long lashes upon her cheek. The regular features, the clear white skin made a picture that would cause any doctor to pause humanly and look.

Saul's eye wandered from the face to Simon in cool, speculative scrutiny and back again. But being by his own admission a man of the world he let no flicker of surprise or wonder mar his professional approach.

"The pulse is somewhat high. Not very," he said, presently. "She has a little appearance of fever. Though one cannot always judge from looks in her type."

He requested certain articles, which Simon left the room to fetch. The girl, roused by the voices, moved and asked to be allowed to sleep, a behest he answered in a soothing manner but postponed by directing her to put out her tongue. She eyed him uncertainly.

"Are you a doctor?"

He noted that she had the air of one who had been, or still was, in the midst of a controversy. There was a suggestion of antagonism, of distrust in her manner. He masterfully put his clinical thermometer into her mouth and, doctor-like, asked her a series of questions while the gag was there. Simon called him. When he returned he took the rod from her mouth.

Her temperature was a hundred and three.

He noted it with a poker-player's face, dipped the thermometer into a glass of water and polished it dry with his cloth as though that were the most important thing in the room to be cared for. He rose and walked thoughtfully up and down. At the bureau he stopped absently to look at the rings, and touched the gold band with his finger. He returned to the bed to put his hand on her forehead. He noted the initials "S. H." on the lapel of her pajamas. On the table he left a bag of magenta pills and a bag of mauve pills, with directions as to use.

Down-stairs he turned on Simon. "Haldane," he said, "the lady is ill." He was proud of his tact in never asking unnecessary questions. "She is," he went on, "in a run-down condition. She could catch pneumonia from looking at a glass of ice-water."

"Is this pneumonia?"

"Might be. Or this influenza."

"What am I to do?"

"Nothing. Let her sleep."

"I wanted to go out to get Easter—a colored woman."

"You can't leave now. Telephone me if there is any change. At the Octurus Club until ten. Then at home. I'll see her in the morning."

He held out his hand. Simon seemed to observe in that handclasp a cordiality and respect

that had never been there before—as from one man of the world to another.

The doctor drove to the Octurus Club. He liked to be seen mingling with the men who belonged there—fellows who knew life whose names it was pleasant to mention in casual conversation. He was proud that nearly everyone in the club knew him and waved a hand to him when they chanced to meet.

There was a small crowd. A nice fellow lounged by the fire—Wyeth by name—whom he had seldom chanced to converse with before. Saul had heard it said that he was a friend of the great C. P. Faulkner and that Faulkner had given him a position in the Appalachian Steel.

“It was too stormy,” said Wyeth, smiling, “for me to make the office to-day. But I had to come to the club.”

“Is there in your office,” asked the doctor, “a man named Haldane?”

“Simon? Oh, yes. One of the office fixtures.”

“Steady young fellow?”

“As a ferry-boat.”

“Upright young man, what? No wild oats? No running round the town stirring things up?”

“Lord no.”

“No beautiful ladies?”

Wyeth laid a hand upon his companion's arm

and laughed immoderately. "Excuse me, Doctor, but that was a good one. If you only knew Simon!"

He laughed so hard that the doctor had to join in.

CHAPTER III

AT ten the following morning Dr. Saul appeared at his brokers'. He referred to them always as "my brokers," because he felt it gave him standing. The investments he made were not profitable. But in his opinion it stamped him as a man of affairs to sit wisely before the quotation board, in company with other wise observers, staring at the maze of figures.

Some months before he had accepted an exclusive tip—received by a multitude—to buy Texas Imperial Valley stock, or "TIV" as the cognoscenti called it. He saw the stock double in value—which furnished him with material for much sophisticated conversation. He found it pleasant to explain that he had an important friend who had told him, before the public had learned it, that oil had been found on the TIV land.

There was just as much conversation for him when the blow fell. It was dramatic to carry it off as a joke—"Dropped twenty-five points in one day, sir"—and laugh. That showed one's sporting spirit.

An astonishing number of people had been

caught in the bubble and wished to talk about it. The doctor knew all the facts. Fifteen years before, in return for services during the famous Colorado River flood, the TIV had been awarded by law certain lands out of the public domain—an award which at the time had not been contested. But when the land began to spurt oil certain persons found it convenient to produce evidence that the land had never belonged in the public domain, but was part of an early Mexican grant—and that the title still rested with the heirs. It was shown that at the time of the flood there had been a member of the family actually living on the tract. The break in the stock had come when the lower courts had decided in favor of the heirs.

It is doubtful if the little doctor had ever lost a few thousand dollars to more advantage. As a result of it he was able to talk on even terms with so many desirable chaps—to have common cause with big business fellows. After his morning office hours he would stop to take a look at the quotation board, to lend a helping hand in appearing gloomy and to shake hands with as many acquaintances as possible.

This morning he had dropped in to gossip about the snow with the senior partner. The senior partner was urbane but fidgety. Saul stayed but a moment—it was not the pleasure of the inter-

view he craved but the enjoyment of speaking of it later. As he emerged, he encountered Miss Albina Caraway, a valued patient. He paused to greet her.

"Ah!" he said. "Vitality. I see the storm has not kept you indoors. I can't afford to have such healthy patients—I really can't."

Albina thought it was undignified in him to refer to the financial side of his profession. "My sister and I are going away for a week," she said, coolly. "Our telephone is out of order and I had to come here about some securities. I am perfectly helpless about investments."

"It's a matter of experience," he commented, tolerantly. "Oh, by the way, I ran across your nephew Haldane last night. Nice, steady fellow. Must be a comfort to you."

Albina sighed. "Poor Simon. He's so mild. If he would only do something. I hate a person to be mild."

"Well ——" began the doctor, and was discreetly silent.

"We did have some hopes a month ago that he had turned human. Mr. Wyeth told us that he had taken a mysterious trip to Buffalo and that the rumor was that he had been secretly married."

"Ah!" said the doctor.

A boy came to say that the senior partner would

see Miss Caraway. Saul watched her disappearing back. "Married," he repeated, thoughtfully.

It happened that the first call on his schedule was the little house on Charlemagne Place. The door was opened by a colored woman. This would be the Easter that Haldane had mentioned.

"Good-morning."

"I'm well. How are you, sir?" replied Easter, respectfully.

"How is the patient?"

"She seems real bright."

"Where is Mr. Haldane?"

"He's gone to his office."

The doctor knocked on the bedroom door and a pleasant voice bade him enter. The patient was sitting up in bed, wearing Simon's best robe. Her hair was carefully arranged. She seemed refreshed.

"Well," he exclaimed, in that tone of pleased surprise he reserved for patients who had done well since his last visit. He prided himself upon his cheerfulness.

"Aren't I an encouraging patient?"

"Very." He took her temperature and her pulse and listened to noises in her chest through his stethoscope. "Remarkable case," he muttered.

"You have the vitality," he assured her, "of

a circus-lady. Last night I was assuring the head of the house that your power of resistance was very low. You looked like a shadow—a ghost.”

“I needed sleep.”

“But don’t forget you’ve had a narrow escape. You were headed for dangerous waters. All I can say now is be careful. Don’t rock the boat.”

“Yes, sir,” she replied meekly, “I shall do as you say.”

He fell back upon a well-worn jest of his. Incidentally he tried an experiment. “The drug I shall prescribe, Mrs. Haldane, is forty-eight hours in bed.”

The room was quiet. He spoke distinctly so that she could have missed no word. But his moment for observation was too fleeting. “Dr. Saul,” said Easter, appearing at the doorway, “you’re wanted at the telephone.”

A call from his office was never less opportune. He returned in a moment but she vouchsafed no comment. “Remember,” he said, “absolute quiet. And don’t rock the boat.”

At the street door he turned upon Easter. “Are you going to stay with Mrs. Haldane?” he persisted.

Easter showed no surprise. “Yes, sir.”

“Broth!” he shouted, better pleased with the result of this experiment. “Orange juice! Plenty of it!”

"Yes, sir, Doctor. I was jess fixing to give her them things."

When Simon returned in the evening he found his visitor lying on the couch in the living-room, her hair carefully arranged, a flowered comfort over her, even a touch of color in her cheeks.

Close to the couch stood a table, upon which Easter now placed Simon's dinner and her insignificant broth. He seated himself with a feeling of embarrassment and breathless unbelief. She watched him silently, amused at his fluster. When he looked up to meet her coolly appraising eyes, a paradoxical mixture of discomfort and content possessed him. He seized at a conversational straw.

"Have you," he asked, "a name?"

She nodded, looking over her cup. "It's Doris."

"Yes, but the—other name—the family name."

"My friends call me by that one."

"Thank you. Well, Miss Doris, if ——"

She considered him seriously. "Just Doris."

"Doris," he said, drawing a long breath.

The terrific intimacy of this lifted him to an unaccustomed plane. He was astir. The unexplained elation, acting as an intoxicant, gave him a touch of pleasant self-confidence. He ventured into the field of conversation, with a certain halt-

ing eagerness to express his ideas. He was by no means a resourceful conversationalist. His Aunt Albina had always impressed upon him the importance of small talk—which, in so far as he could find out, was merely a noise made by the mouth to bridge over a given interval of time. He had no such talk.

His conversation now—mainly about the sick child near by—was neither brilliant nor unusually interesting. But it was satisfactory to him. It was invigorating to be able to express aloud the matters he was accustomed to discuss with himself in silence. He found, for instance, that he was glad to express to someone how great was his desire to help other persons when they were in trouble, yet how unresourceful he was. "I think," he confessed, "it is because I am unable to help myself. I blunder along."

After a time she asked him if he would read the headlines in the newspaper to her, so that she might get an idea of what was going on. She listened attentively, generally uninterested in detail and quite satisfied, except in a few cases, with the news as carried in the captions.

One of the news items spoke of the activities of an organization which was understood to have for its purpose the kissing of girls upon the street. He read hastily. Glancing at him out of the corner of her eye, she composed her face into an ex-

pression of unnatural gravity. "Quite proper," she commented.

He moved uncomfortably.

"I shouldn't buy a hat," she explained, "without trying it on. Should I? So, if I ever see a man on the street that looks like husband, I propose to go right up and sample him."

He drew in his breath. She was not smiling. He wondered if she were serious. Could promiscuous kissing possibly be the modern view? Or was her attitude the result of the particular training and environment that had been hers? Or was she teasing him? He sighed.

"Poor, dear, straightforward thing," she was thinking.

CHAPTER IV

MR. SCRIVENER, one of the minor bookkeepers of the Appalachian Steel Products Company, was a curious, solitary little man. In some unexplained manner, he managed always to be a little soiled as to linen, always unshaven. It certainly is demonstrable that there must have been certain times when he was freshly shaven or when his collar was clean. But he seemed never to be seen in that condition.

He appeared at the office at nine in the morning and disappeared shortly after five. Were it not that he was occasionally seen upon the street, shuffling thoughtfully along or else gazing into bookshop windows, it might have been conjectured that he went out of existence in the interim. Few knew where he lived or whether he had any friends.

He did have one or two friends. He was a great reader of books and loved to discuss his favorites over and over with anyone who would listen. There was a certain Mr. Christian, a hotel chef, who was in such a humor during his moments of relaxation that the drone of Mr. Scrivener's paragraphs was quite soothing to him. Frequently

the bookkeeper would come to his little house on Charlemagne Place and sit with him.

It was after one of these evenings that Scrivener was making his way home through the snow at the very late hour of nine. The house ahead, he reflected, from which the light shone out on the drift through a narrow space beneath the window-shade, was the place where that strange man Haldane lived.

Queer customer he was. Were it anyone else you could drop in and pass the time of day with him. But Haldane, in spite of the fact that he was the target for ridicule at the office, was possessed of a sort of forbidding reserve.

Scrivener, therefore, did not call. However, he did the next best thing in the way of cordiality. He looked through the window.

What he saw caused him to stand still, as though the mild winter night had frozen him into a rotund little snow-man. Still water, he reflected, runneth deep. So that was the manner of man Simon Haldane was.

CHAPTER V

IT is doubtful if Simon noted any stir in the Appalachian office when he entered the big room and took his accustomed seat at his paper-littered desk. Persons who become famous overnight do not learn of it early in the morning.

He might have noted that the big books on Mr. Scrivener's desk remained unopened, that there was a general air of inactivity. But then there was that Nashville matter before him—a knotty problem of procedure Mr. Trundle had aloofly turned over to him to unravel and coördinate. He was presently aroused from his absorption by the realization that someone was addressing him.

“Mr. Haldane,” said a voice, “do you sing?”

He discovered MacKellar standing by his desk. “What?” he asked, blinking. “Why, no, I do not sing.”

“I thought perhaps,” MacKellar explained, “you might be willing to oblige us with a verse of ‘Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms.’”

“I’m sorry,” Simon replied, politely. “I can’t sing it. But it is a beautiful old song.”

Nell nudged a contemporary who was thought-

lessly attending to Company business. "Poor old Simon," she observed. "If brains was electricity he couldn't ring a door-bell."

"So you don't sing that of an evening?" mused MacKellar.

"I never sing it."

"Then what do you talk to her about?"

There was an eddy of laughter. The old Buffalo thing again, Simon thought. He tried to return to his work.

"Say, Simon."

"Yes, Mr. MacKellar."

"Didn't I see you at the Elite Jazz Plaza last Tuesday with a swell dame?"

"Listen to Mac," giggled Nell. "He ought to be a broadcasting station."

"It was not I," replied Simon.

"'It was not I,'" murmured MacKellar. "In the continued presence of ladies one gets to talk very rarefied English. What, Simon?"

This was an interesting phase of the situation. "What would you have said?" Simon inquired.

The other laughed easily. "I might have said 'You got me wrong, dear heart.' Remember that. It's a good one—for evening conversation. By the firelight, you know."

Simon, who found that he no longer knew what the conversation was about, turned again to his work.

MacKellar also resumed consideration of work, making a killing pretence of talking to himself. "Old Simon Haldane," he murmured, "the gay Adonis. The heart pulverizer." Which, naturally, preyed so upon the risibilities of his companions that it was difficult for them to assume a convincing air of efficiency when the awe-inspiring figure of Mr. Trundle strode into the room.

"Where is Mr. Wyeth?" demanded the chief, crisply.

"He's not here, sir. He's sick this morning."

"Humph!"

He left some papers on Nell Mangan's desk with a word of instruction. "Too much sociability here!" he rapped out, glaring about him, and stalked out of the room.

"So there," observed MacKellar.

Meanwhile Wyeth was leisurely breakfasting. A charming lady, inadvertently met up with, had led him into late hours the preceding evening. It was comforting to telephone the office that he would not arrive before eleven, to have his breakfast sent in to his room and to spend the morning refreshingly unhurried. That was the way all the big business men did. This idea at the Appalachian of expecting a man in his position to be at his desk promptly at the stroke of nine was absurd.

On his way down-town, after the morning ritual

of bathing, shaving and breakfasting had been gone through with, he stopped at the doctor's office, both for the purpose of lending an air of verisimilitude to his somewhat unconvincing illness and for another purpose.

Dr. Saul listened to a little yarn containing certain quite correct symptoms of lumbago and, after asking a few questions, gave a list of suggestions and methods of procedure. Wyeth thanked him and rose.

"Sometimes," he suggested, "when this pain becomes acute, I feel as though if I had a taste—just a small shot ——"

The doctor's pen scratched steadily for a moment. "There it is," he said. "Since the circus has been closed, bootlegging has languished. There has been quite a drought."

"I was unable to get any from that source."

The doctor was proud of his knowledge of events of the day. "They had a large clientele—the good families. Among their performers were several young women—very attractive—who called at the big houses and left something beside their cards. The police are trying to find the young women now. Well, see you again."

As Wyeth's hand touched the door-knob a thought occurred to Saul. "By the way," he said, "the other day I saw that pretty young wife of Haldane's."

Wyeth's jaw dropped. "Ah!" he said, foolishly.

"She was ill. Called me in. I thought she was going to have a bad case of flu."

The caller stared. "Yes. Oh, yes. Haldane—he—he's reticent."

"Quite so. Shy. Worried too. Just like a young husband. Thought she wouldn't live five minutes more. But I'm always cheerful. I said, 'The drug I shall prescribe, Mrs. Haldane, is forty-eight hours in bed.'"

"You said that?"

"Yes."

"Well—what did she say?"

"She agreed to stay in bed."

Wyeth wended his leisurely way officewards. There was something jolly and exhilarating about the half-past-ten air out-of-doors. All the world was cramping itself over its desk while he sauntered pleasantly along, enjoying the bright sunshine. And in his breast a piece of devastating news.

But even with the news bursting within him he did not lose his cunning. At the office he considered the situation carefully. After careful cogitation he at length called to his desk Whispering Hollis. Hollis was famed for his conservation of resources. His whispering propensity, generally believed to be due to lack of power in the

vocal cords, was ascribed by some to economy. At any rate the salient point in his character, as now considered by Wyeth, was that he was never dead broke, as were regular fellows.

"Hollis," Wyeth said, impressively, "if you can lend me five dollars till pay-day, I'll tell you a piece of news that will make your eyes pop out."

Hollis drew near. "What?" he whispered.

"Do I get the five?"

The currency was produced, changed hands. "Now," said the assistant chief, "Dr. Saul told me a little while ago that old Simon Haldane called him in the other night to prescribe for his wife."

Hollis's eyes bulged. He was literally speechless.

"The doctor actually saw her. He said, 'The drug you need, Mrs. Haldane, is forty-eight hours in bed.'"

The other sputtered questions, sibilating excitedly. Wyeth answered and turned to his desk, pleasantly exhilarated by having obtained his prescription for stimulant from the doctor and having sold the doctor's conversation for enough to pay doctor's fee and price of stimulant. Which no one could deny was a good morning's work.

He noted with satisfaction that at the first opportunity Hollis gathered two or three about him.

Wyeth strolled over to look at a filing-case near by.

"The other night," Hollis was whispering, "it was Tuesday night just about eight, Haldane called up Dr. Saul and said, 'Come quick. My wife is dying.'"

There was a moment of awed, stunned silence.

"Did he go? Did he actually see her?"

"Absolutely," hissed Hollis. "Haldane was pale with worry. He took the doctor into the room and said, 'Doctor, this is my wife.' And the doctor addressed her by name saying, 'The drug you need, Mrs. Haldane, is forty-eight hours in bed.'"

"G-o-o-d night!" exclaimed MacKellar.

"What's the matter, cherry?" asked Nell, passing by. "What's the idear?"

MacKellar glanced warily down the room. "Old Simon," asserted he, "is married."

"Hot dog!" said Nell.

CHAPTER VI

It was a pleasant sensation, opening his front door, to find her there, to have her smile at him over her shoulder as though she meant him to believe she was glad he had come, to touch for a moment the white hand she held out to him. Trudging home through the snow, he harbored a warmth of expectancy.

Sometimes he was in doubt as to whether he had adopted the right course in keeping her in his house. The situation was probably not conventional. The trouble with the conventions was that they were so badly edited. There was nowhere you could turn to obtain an authoritative ruling on any point. The conventions were absolute—except in certain exigencies to be passed upon after the exigency was all over.

He found her sitting in the wing chair, fully dressed. The flowered comfort had disappeared. The flowers in her cheeks were a little more apparent. "I have splendid news for you," she said, promptly. "I am going to leave to-morrow."

He rubbed his thumb against the palm of his hand. "That I hardly call splendid news."

She made a little bow. "But I have done

enough damage. Suppose some of your friends should come in and you did not have time to hide my obnoxious presence by locking me in the cellar?"

"I should do no such thing."

"That is what I fear. Your little doctor took my breath away yesterday. He—but never mind that. The point is I am going to relieve you by going away."

"I'm sorry."

"You're very tolerant. But this time I must go. There is a train that will take me—a long way."

He was depressed. A long way, she said? To some distant city whose streets his foot never trod. There were men to whom Charleston, Denver, Boston, Buffalo were but incidents. His own trips away scarcely kept pace with the sabbatical years. She would go like a winged creature. And he, immobile, would stay. The high gods seemed to have decreed that the world should move by him into the far distance.

Yet, for reasons not wholly clear to him he could not mention this. From pride mainly, in that he did not wish to acknowledge that immobility to her—the immobility which confessed that he was by no means the flashing sort of person whom they sent to carry great ideas to distant places. In addition he was sensitive about men-

tioning that he would miss her. Therefore, thinking of no other phase of the situation to speak of, he said nothing.

Embarrassed at his own silence, he handed her the newspaper. "The paramount fact for public note and memory to-day," he said, to break the silence, "is that two men died from burns received at the mill fire. Three girls implicated will be indicted for manslaughter, arson and other things. The police are on the trail of a fourth. Otherwise the paper is rather dull."

When she had read a portion of the front page she laid it aside. "Simon," she asked, "would you mind closing the shutters of the front window? Last night I had a creepy feeling that someone was looking in."

At the dinner she was allowed a broadly construed convalescent diet. She talked very little. Simon bridged the silences by telling the simple things he had done during the day. Now that the first strangeness of having someone to talk to had worn off, he found that there was a certain luxury in talking instead of thinking. It was entertaining to tell her of the strange undercurrent of excitement that had run through the office all day—little groups forming and dispersing, persons suddenly rising and rushing over to other persons' desks. That was the way at the office—quiet one day, noisy the next. The work Mr.

Trundle had given him had been absorbing. After Easter had cleared the table, he was explaining this piece of work to her.

There was a sudden sharp knock at the door. She started nervously, grasping his arm. "What is that?" she whispered.

The knock was repeated—sharp, imperative.

CHAPTER VII

SIMON had an unpleasant conviction that there was disaster in that knock.

There were three courses open to him. He could open the door; he could sit still, trusting that the closed shutters would conceal the light in the room; or, if that proved to be too nerve-racking, he could escape with her by the rear door and return after a safe interval. Either of the latter two things would have been preferable to the former—which he adopted.

Though having the sense of impending disaster, his nature lacked that will to deceive, that finesse, that power to plan quickly—or whatever it is that makes a strategist. Therefore he opened the door.

On the steps stood a little man and a very large woman. He stared blankly at them, until the slow realization came to him that it was Hollis from the office. Reluctantly he opened the door wider—an almost imperceptible gesture of hospitality. Hollis introduced the large—the massive—woman as Mrs. Hollis, from which it was apparent that she was either his wife or his mother.

Simon gibbered some English words—bereft of

all semblance of syntax. The Hollises brushed easily by him, filling the room with their presence.

"Oh, there you are!" cried Mrs. H., spying Doris. And Hollis, also spying her, whispered (in 6 point type), "Oh, there you are!" and both said, "How t'dieu."

Simon was astonished that they knew her. Doris bowed uncertainly, her hands nervously clasped behind her. Mrs. Hollis laid her coat on a chair, sighed and seated herself in another chair. "Set that cartoon down, Sammy," she directed, referring to a pasteboard box Hollis was dutifully holding.

"Well," she continued, comfortably, "it has been a bad storm—from every standpoint of view."

The girl made no effort at conversation but stared warily at the visitors. The silence that followed was strained. Simon's uneasiness increased. Had he wished to speak there was no thought in his mind he could have framed into a sentence. He grew rigid as a second knock fell upon the door.

"Mercy," observed Mrs. Hollis, with evident relief, "whom can that be?"

The host moved with reluctant feet toward the portal. He had a glimpse of Doris moving further into the background. But it was Hollis, rushing forward, who opened the door.

"Enter," he whispered, enthusiastically, letting in MacKellar and a timid wren of a lady who looked as if she might have just finished crying. The new arrivals greeted Simon and the Hollises, the female MacKellar obliging with a quick frightened bob of the head, performed without facial change. They bowed to Doris and said musically, "How t'dieu."

Another knock—like a knife in the wound. Investigation revealed Fulford and a stenographer from the Appalachian, whose name Simon remembered was either Downing or Upman. Knock number four. Mr. Scrivener, solus, a little shopworn but cheerful. By this time the room had become very noisy. Mrs. Hollis laughed in a very high key and everyone talked at once, inquiring where to put coats, hats and the parcels they bore.

Understanding dawned upon Doris. This was the *modus operandi* of a surprise party. That was certain, even though its malign purpose was obscure. Fifth knock. Enter Wyeth and Nell Mangan. Wyeth offered his hand to Simon. "Best wishes, old fellow," he said. "The best in the world."

He faced about and waited a moment. "And, since you won't introduce me," he observed, urbanely, "I'll perform that ceremony myself. Ray Wyeth," he explained, holding out his hand.

Doris barely touched his fingers. "How do you do, Mr. Wyeth?" she replied, faintly.

Nell followed. "Oh, deary," she exclaimed, putting a hand on her arm, "I love your dress."

"It's very simple."

There followed a heavy, inert silence. Simon, having at length arranged and edited his thoughts upon the subject, had also arrived at the inevitable conclusion that this was a surprise party he was unwillingly attending. Its purpose, occasion and reason for being was beyond his power to conjecture. Standing awkwardly by the wall, it was not difficult to see that he was awaiting the next move with that same crushed spirit with which one sitting in a dentist's chair watches the hand hovering selectively over an array of penetrating tools.

Doris, still weak from her illness, leaned against the bookcase, grateful to the shadow of the corner. She felt no urge to hospitality and no responsibility to offer anything save a mere lack of impoliteness. She had no way of understanding the presence of these visitors—whom she viewed with a wary distrust. If there was to be any conversation with them, that must be left to Simon. Simon, for his part, was convinced that if there was to be any conversation with them, her knowledge of the world would dictate the nature of it.

Nell stood this pause as long as could be expected. She grasped MacKellar by the arm. "This is a frost," she hissed. "You *got* to do something."

Finesse and tact were not in MacKellar's deck of cards. Apprised that the responsibility for action rested with him, he glanced hastily about, put a disk on Simon's phonograph, seized Nell by the hand and began with her to float gracefully about the room. There was six feet of him vertically—and, horizontally, great lengths of arms and feet. He had the subtle sinuosity of a folding rule. Every movement developed an acute angle in him. As he moved he became a perfect symphony of elbows and knee-joints, the ensemble of him sliding easily from one intricate polygon to another. He was a blaze of reëntrant angles. He violated, without apparent effort, every principle of composition and line. Old Mr. Euclid would have found theorems without number in each change of his profile.

As he proceeded Greek-vasely around the room, the light-footed girl put a curve into every move he made a double angle. Her gracefulness accentuated the outrageous abundance of his hands and feet. Everywhere one looked he seemed to have a hand or foot that had not been there before.

Hysterics spread a contagion of foolishness among the guests. A volunteer caught Nell's un-

occupied hand and moved around with the pair. Two others! Mrs. Hollis, shrieking at her own audacity, added her rotund figure to the ensemble. Then all of the guests.

Doris and Simon found themselves, reluctantly, in the centre of a circle which revolved noisily about them. Simon was dazed. The girl had regained a measure of her usual calmness and was studying them with a cold detachment, speculating as to their intent. It was not until they stopped the phonograph and began to sing that she understood.

The mind of the average person fits names to melodies slowly. But there is one unmistakable air. It was that tune the guests sang as they marched around. Doris was conscious of a gentle volley against her and saw the floor rolling with rice. Over the mantel had mysteriously appeared two satin slippers.

Even Simon could not miss the inference. These co-workers of his had carried their error to its ultimate conclusion. They had come loaded with the impedimenta of festivity, to make a feast. Terror seized him. Steeped as they were in error, he knew from long experience it would be useless to reason with them. His strongest impulse was the elemental one to run away.

At that moment his eye fell upon Doris, calm and self-reliant. With a sigh of relief, he assured

himself that he could depend upon her. He shifted the responsibility to her shoulders. She possessed an unruffled poise that lent her an almost aristocratic mien. He had noticed the same thing during the difficult moments of their first meeting.

Perceiving that the burden of action rested with her, she reasoned that the best way out of any situation was the one that was simplest. She waited, knowing that presently the momentum of their enthusiasm would give way.

The momentum did give way. They found themselves standing in a motionless ring—flushed, overheated, wondering just what strange impulse had been leading them on. But a certain expectation held them, and they stared alternately at Simon and the girl.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” burst forth MacKellar, “I introduce Mrs. Simon Hald ——”

“Stop!” cried Doris, sharply.

The first word she had said cut in on them like a knife. There was a hushed stillness. The whispered tick of the clock was plainly audible.

“I am not Mrs. Simon Haldane.”

No word. No movement. No sound even of one breathing.

“You have made a mistake. He is not my husband.”

They were startled. Incredulously they stared

at her, endeavoring to understand, to rearrange their calculations. Suddenly MacKellar spoke.

"Simon," said he, unexpectedly, "is this your wife?"

The head of the house, who was fully occupied by his admiration for the dispatch with which Doris had handled the situation, started perceptibly. "Why," he stammered, confused by not having expected to be called upon, "why, n-no."

He did not understand why his questioner shouted "Not quick enough, Simon. Not quick enough." As if the value of his testimony was affected by whether he said it pat-pat off his tongue or whether he said it after due deliberation.

He was dismayed by the fact that his reply seemed somehow to have bounded back ineffectually.

"Wasn't my assertion enough?" asked Doris, with dignity.

"Too much. You almost convinced us. But it stuck in Simon's throat. You should have rehearsed it beforehand."

"I am not his wife," she reasserted, a little wildly.

"We know," replied Nell. "We understand it now. That's the reason you wear the wedding-ring, my dear."

"It's my mother's. And it's on the wrong hand."

"That's all clear. She couldn't be married to him, friends, because her wedding-ring is on the wrong hand." They laughed in a relieved way. They were beginning to understand.

"The fact," explained MacKellar, "that her address happens to be the same as his is just a coincidence. Such things are occurring all the time. Our mistake."

For all save Simon and the girl the tension of the moment was relieved. Tears of vexation were in her eyes. Through the course of the whole episode, she had been aware of Wyeth's eyes upon her—calm, searching eyes. He touched her on the arm now.

"Simply tell them," he said, in a low tone, "who you are and how you happen to be here. It's the only way to convince them."

Meditatively she touched her hand to her lips. She shook her head.

"I can't do it."

CHAPTER VIII

"I THINK," suggested Wyeth, smoothly, "the way out of it for you is to leave. I could take you to a train—or to a hotel. Then I could come back and make some inane excuse."

She was scarcely listening. The fact that this man understood the situation was rather annoying than comforting. The affair had taken an irritating turn—which could not now be easily corrected. Not that it made much difference to her whether these guests, whom she would never see again, thought she was married to Simon or not. She had told them she was not. If they preferred not to believe her, it made little difference.

"No, I shan't go away. It would be too difficult for Simon, for one thing."

She looked over the room. The first wave of enthusiasm having spent itself, the party had subsided into the state of liveliness of patients waiting in an outer office for the doctor. Mrs. Hollis was endeavoring to keep the conversation revolving. "I see," said she, "they have decided to submit the textile strike to meditation."

There was one outstanding fact—the very evident cordiality of these visitors. They had come with a certain simplicity and friendship. The

sentiment of the matter had appealed to them. That was so pathetically apparent. The fact that this lonely, shy man had taken himself, as they believed, a wife and there was no one to make glad with him over it had touched a vulnerable spot in their matter-of-fact souls. A full measure of human kindness had prompted the affront they brought.

"Can't you persuade them to go home?" she asked.

Wyeth shook his head. "This is the first party most of them have attended in years. They are happy. Dynamite wouldn't move them."

She left him abruptly and walked over to Simon. The unwilling host stood looking absently into the fire, planning the best manner of explaining once more to the assembled company that she was not really his wife. Doris held a fold of his coat between her thumb and forefinger.

"Mr. Wyeth says they won't go home. They have brought a perfectly enormous supply of food. We must do something. I shall die if they just sit."

She looked at him for a moment and her serious face broke into a smile. "Of course," he agreed, thinking of the smile.

"—and there was another lady," Mrs. Hollis was informing those within range, "by the name of Mrs. Brown. She was a great sufferer. She

had very close veins for many years. A great sufferer, but always the smile for her friends."

Doris beckoned to Wyeth. "They are slowly smothering to death," she said. "What shall we do?"

"Why not," asked Simon, resentfully, "let them smother?"

He had been misunderstood all his life. Ever since he could remember he had seemed to be striving for one thing and succeeding only in becoming another. He had striven to be efficient and capable and been a blunderer. He had desired friendship and been a buffoon. He had had the dim hope that some day he would be married and there would be a company to celebrate the occurrence. And here was the company to celebrate and he was not married.

He turned abruptly to them. "I am not married," he exclaimed, earnestly. "Don't carry this any further. Don't ——"

Glad of a diversion they shouted at him. "Yes. We got that idea."

"Doris," he continued, "is simply staying here. I don't want you to think we are married."

"No." "Trust us." "Nothing further from our thoughts."

Tears came to his eyes. It was like him to blunder along—to be one thing and get credit for being another, to say one thing and be un-

derstood to have meant another. He set his teeth.

Doris put her hand on his arm. "Never mind," she said, "not now."

A feeling of deep dejection settled upon him. He was ineffectual. He could not accomplish the things he willed to accomplish. He could not speak the English language so they would understand.

Dully he watched them play the footless game Wyeth suggested. It consisted in writing a telegram, the words to begin with the letters of a given word. His resentment increased when Wyeth proposed "bride" as the key word. "The person," Wyeth was saying, "who writes the best telegram will be given a prize consisting of—er ——"

"A fur-lined soup tureen," suggested Nell. An imbecilic waste of words, Simon decided irritably.

But they laughed loudly. They had come to celebrate and they were determined to succeed. He watched them as they labored in the throes of their insane literary composition. It was his own marriage they had come to celebrate.

"Oh, fudge upon it," exclaimed Nell. "Listen, Simon, where's your dictionary?" He procured the volume for her. It was incongruous that he should have to help entertain these people who,

by their stubborn obtuseness, were so violently disturbing the even course of his life.

He watched them collecting the little slips of paper. He felt the responsibility for action—upon his shoulders rested the burden of correcting this error. He must proceed with more strategy, more finesse. And finesse required deep thought.

Wyeth and Doris retired to a secluded spot for appraisal of the telegraphic efforts. After some delay, they returned. Wyeth stepped to the centre of the room and importantly clapped his hands for silence. “—and,” observed Mrs Hollis, unable to stop short on high, “she wore bare limbs in the dance. I thought it was shocking.”

Simon thought Wyeth made a ridiculously serious matter of the flimsy game. He stated, incorrectly, that the contest had developed much latent talent—whereas it was apparent that no talent at all was required. Wyeth read all the entries, among which were such vacuous advices as “Begin right in dodging expenses” and “Both remain in dreamy extacy.”

“I didn’t know,” confessed Nell, “whether you spelled it e-x-t-a-s-y or e-x-t-a-c-y. It wasn’t in Simon’s word catalogue.”

“C-y is correct,” ruled the judge, which in Simon’s opinion did not adequately settle the case. “The next is my own. ‘Burnt roasts indicate devil of an evening.’ There are too many

words in that but the sentiment is so good I felt it ought to be preserved."

He concluded with the statement that the judges had been unanimous in their decision that "Bash rolling-pin in dearie's eye" was, from the standpoint of diction and sound advice, the best submitted and the prize would therefore go forward by prepaid express, etc. Simon saw nothing meritorious in the selection.

Sensing a lull in the proceedings, he advanced bravely to Mrs. Hollis's chair. Napoleon or Hannibal or Alexander had stated the theorem that to defeat an enemy one should divide his forces into small portions and defeat each separately. Mrs. Hollis was not exactly a small portion but ——

"Mrs. Hollis," said he, grasping the nettles firmly, "concerning Doris ——"

"Oh, Mr. Haldane, such a sweet girl! So genteel! I know you are going to be happy. I recol ——"

"I must explain. She was ill when she came here. There was nothing to do but to send her to bed and call in a doctor. The doctor said ——"

"I know what he said. They told me twenty times he passed the remark that 'the drug you need, Mrs. Haldane, is forty-eight hours in bed.'"

"He was mistaken," exclaimed Simon, hur-

riedly. "He should not have said 'Mrs. Haldane ——' "

"I know. They frequently are mistaken. Yet, on the whole, what should we do without them? But as you say, your wife seems to be perfectly well."

He spoke slowly to make his words impressive. "She—is—not—my—wife."

Mrs. Hollis was interested in the efforts of Mac-Kellar to entertain the company by placing the ball of his foot against the wall and endeavoring to step over it without removing it. This soon resulted in a line of guests against the wall ridiculously hopping.

"I wouldn't have encouraged that," offered Mrs. Hollis. "It soils the paper so."

She turned to Simon. "Why, Mr. Haldane," she said, "I don't know what your reasons for wanting to keep this marriage a secret was—no doubt her folks objects—but whatever the reasons, I'll say don't!

"Why," she continued, "if you was to raise up your right hand and swear you was not married to her—as your friend, I wouldn't dare repeat it. Consideration being given to the fact that you are now living alone in this house with her. Now would I?"

He seemed to find no reply.

"Look at your wife, Simon," said Nell.

CHAPTER IX

SIMON looked. They had asked her to try the awkward exploit of foot-hurdling. Without comment she stepped forward. She did not seem awkward. Rather there was in her slender figure an easy-flowing muscular grace. She placed the sole of her slipper against the proper spot on the wall and hopped lightly over, starting with her back to the room and ending facing it, in perfect balance. A feeling of pride rose in him—as if he had accomplished the feat himself.

“Bully!” said Wyeth to her, in a low tone. “You’ve been circus-trained.”

She stared at him.

“And now,” announced MacKellar, “we get to the gist of the matter. Let’s eat.”

From the kitchen appeared miraculously napkins, plates, sandwiches, olives, nuts, coffee, cheese, pickles, rich cake, with richer icing, pastry, more cheese, more coffee and all the viands with which the reckless evening reveller is fed as a guarantee of pleasant dreams.

Wyeth sat between Doris and Nell Mangan. “Appears to me,” whispered Mrs. Hollis to Mrs. MacKellar, “as if Mr. Wyeth approved of Mrs. Haldane right well.”

"He's very nice-spoken," ventured Mrs. MacKellar, her first conversational effort of the evening.

"Oh *yes*. So genteel. His family is descended from the old Paltrons."

Simon watched Wyeth talking to the woman they called Mrs. Haldane, wondering at his ease and grace. Wyeth seemed always to have something funny to say or do. His pleasant byplay of pretending to steal almonds from her plate amused her.

"Do-on't," she said, in her low, carrying voice. "You're not nice."

Simon wondered why that sounded pleasant. Surely, if one were not nice, it should not be thrilling to be told of it. But Wyeth had a way with women. He could so comport himself that they would recognize his merits and tell him without hesitation that he was not nice. Now no female had ever told Simon he was not nice.

At length everything had been eaten—or at any rate the craving of the guests had been satisfied—and the party began to dissolve. There was a scurrying for overshoes and mufflers and coats, a speculation as to whether engines would be cold, a babel of tongues. "The party was jake, Simon!" exclaimed Nell. People were bewilderingly shaking hands with him. "I've just been telling Hollis I never did laugh so much." More

talk, more laughing. At length the door closed upon it all, and the voices faintly heard upon the street diminuendo. Within silence. And they alone.

“Well, Simon,” she said, at last, “you’ve acquired a wife.”

PART THREE

BEWARE THE BRIDES OF MARCH

CHAPTER I

"THERE are just two points of view," Simon said, at length. "Mine and yours. This—occurrence does not harm me. Rather it helps. I am no longer a buffoon. They think since I am—married—to such a wonderful person as you I cannot be quite such a fool as they thought. So much for that.

"And," he continued, "you will go away soon—far away. The people who were here do not even know your name. But when you go you will have left about me a glamour—a precious glamour."

"I understand," she said, gently. "I hope it will turn out that way for you. It is all confused now and I'm too tired to think."

She ascended the stair, pausing at the point where the rail formed an angle with the ceiling to wave her hand. He stood looking after her. Her presence there and the association of his name with hers had made the others different toward him—friendly, anxious to understand. Even if it were fleeting, even if she were to go away to-morrow —

He stroked his hair in a worried way. Why, she *couldn't* go away now! Not the day immedi-

ately after. In three or four days perhaps. Or a week. Then there would be time to prepare a reason for her going. And when she did not come back?

Of course, it would be the same. But it was further away.

The telephone bell rang. He took the receiver from the hook. "Oh, is that Mr. Haldane—Mrs. Hollis speaking—sorry to disturb you at this unseemly hour—we have just got home—did I leave my pocketbook there or did I leave it in the car and was it stolen—will you kindly look, please?"

The pocketbook was on the table beneath the lamp. He gave Mrs. Hollis this information.

"I'm so relieved—oh, Mr. Haldane, we was talking it over coming home all of us and Hollis and I decided we wanted to have the same people at our house Saturday night—just come informal like we did to-night—we had such a grand time—do you think you can come—or would you want to consult the boss first? What? I can't hear you."

"Just a moment," replied Simon, who had said nothing. He hesitated and then made a decision. "Why, Mrs. Hollis, we should be delighted to come."

He hung up the receiver aghast at his own daring and ascending the stair tapped upon the door of her room.

“Doris, are you asleep?”

A soft noise within. “No.” Her voice was close to the other side of the panel. “It would never do to open this door. But—I can hear you.”

“I have a confession to make.”

“Oh, Simon.”

“I have just accepted an invitation for us for Saturday night.”

“How fine!” she replied, unexpectedly. “Where?”

He explained. “But that means you cannot go to-morrow.”

“Did you want me to go?”

“Why ——” he began, incredulously, and groped for a word.

“Thank you,” she replied.

CHAPTER II

THE following day brought forth an event which, while of sufficient importance to occupy space on the front pages of the newspapers, was hardly of such a nature as to be expected to greatly affect the course of Simon Haldane's life.

He awoke in the morning with the devastating conviction that something tremendous, frightening, had occurred. Then he remembered. Though he was not married, yet for purposes of introduction, acceptance of invitations, filing and indexing, there was now a Mrs. Simon Haldane.

It was a frightful uncertainty. He had undertaken to run down a steep hill, upon which, having started, he could not stop. He was unaware what manner of thing threatened him at the bottom. His heart missed a beat when he thought of it.

Yet, at breakfast she made nothing of it. And she was a woman learned in the ways of the world. Doubtless the old mid-Victorian conventions had changed. During the war women had driven automobiles through the night, slept in the open beside men or women, smashed all the rules which were based on the axiom that the opportunity for immorality constitutes immorality.

When he thought of these things he was ashamed because his sheltered life had kept him so isolated from the world. Her cheerful unconcern rebuked him for his overestimation of the affair.

"Simon," she said, "listen to me."

He paused certain that she was going to say something crucial concerning the matter.

"In the matter of vests," she continued, impressively, "the top buttonhole should button upon the top button. When you put button number one into buttonhole number two you look *funny!*"

There! Pouf! So much for the situation.

As he walked officewards he found that the great city was coming back to normal. . . . The snow which for a day had made it lovely was being piled resentfully in dirty little mountains, from which it was resentfully shovelled into dirty carts for disposal through the city sewers. The puissant municipality was giving an object lesson to the elements—or any other force—that dared to make it beautiful.

At his usual corner he bought his usual newspaper. In it was the startling news. On the crowded sidewalk he stopped, obstructing the multitude, to read. Poor old C. P.! he kept thinking. Poor old C. P.!

He could get no connected idea of it there in

the crowd which thrust itself against him, making him lose his place and read the same line over and over. At the office, greatly disturbed, he stopped in Mr. Trundle's office—an act of *lese majesty* which brought the frown to the chief's brow. Trundle did not care to have the employees dropping in casually as though there might be a plane of equality between them.

"I am so distressed," explained Simon, hurriedly, "about Mr. Faulkner. I—I thought I would say that I am going to read about it before I begin work."

Mr. Trundle stared at the newspaper. Newspapers, conversation, human interests—were things which, after the opening of the office, ought to fade out of existence. Employees must become automatic during the ordeal between nine and five. The work must be made as difficult as possible. He stared at the paper as if he would wither it with his glance. Referring to it or to Simon's preposterous suggestion that he actually *read* it before proceeding with business would have been almost sacrilegious.

Instead he turned to his desk. "Mr. Faulkner," he said, rebukingly, "has been a marvellous man. Business with him came first—always."

"I have had for him," observed Simon, "a real affection."

What made Haldane stand there talking?

This wasn't a party. An indirect but icy reproof rose to the chief's tongue. But while he was preparing to let it drive, the thought occurred to him that such loyalty, couched as it was in the proper terms of humility, was quite befitting in a person occupying a subordinate position.

"Your feelings, Haldane," he observed instead, condescendingly, "do you credit. Even the humblest worker should have an admiration and respect for his employer."

"But it was not as an employer exactly ——"

"I see. Quite so. As a man—as a man!" Mr. Trundle leaned back in his chair, his fingertips together. Mr. Faulkner had once told him he must occasionally unbend toward the men. Perhaps this was an occasion. At any rate, he could not help feeling somewhat exalted by the fact that the stepping out of Faulkner meant the stepping up of others. The next position above his own was the position of General Manager in New York. Twenty-five thousand dollars per annum ——

"Haldane," said Trundle, easily, "Mr. Faulkner was a spectacular man. He spent unlimited money to realize his visions. If he dreamed of a great country estate, he called in architects and landscape fellows the next day to start work on it. If he thought of a business enterprise, he took money from another enterprise and started the

new one. Frequently he won, sometimes he lost. He was an adventurer. He has sometimes been criticized for borrowing money on the security of the Appalachian or other companies he controlled whenever and for whatever purpose he needed it. Admittedly he sometimes spread his money out quite thin. But the point is, Haldane, he made money for himself and everyone connected with him. That is what makes him spectacular."

Feeling that this was enough unbending for one occasion, Trundle turned back to his papers with a wry grimace intended to be a smile. Simon returned to his desk to finish reading the account in the newspaper.

Very carefully he read it. His whole being was filled with sympathy. If the great man could have died—in action—with all his faculties intact. But to thrust into a custodial sanitarium—the body, which had meant nothing, living on to be a tomb for the mind—the great mind now seemingly dead.

Fulford rushed in after luncheon, disturbed that the news of the mental collapse of C. P. had caused a panic in the market. Wild and contradictory rumors were flying about. The most recurrent and disturbing of these were to the effect that Faulkner was not solvent. Fear followed in the wake of the rumors. The collapse of the Faulkner financial prop meant the collapse

of a high house of cards. No one could estimate how far-reaching the collapse might be.

It might even affect the solvency of the Appalachian Steel. The thought was a sobering one to Simon and others whose adult life had been spent with the company. Color was lent to the rumor by the memory of the efforts of C. P. to obtain control of the Erie Steel Company in order to amalgamate it with his own. The rise in price of this stock had made him pay dearly for his effort to press through this coup, which had never been brought to a successful conclusion.

The dethroned captain of finance could lend no assistance in settling his own affairs. The priceless records that had existed once in that secretive brain were blurred out of existence. He could not read them himself.

The daughter, a person inheriting his keen perception, had for years acted as a sort of confidential secretary to him. She possessed the records and histories of his personal transactions. But she was in Mexico. Inheriting also the parental thirst for adventure, by way of vacation she had left El Paso two weeks before with some friends and allowed herself to be cut off from communication in the country south of the Rio Grande.

"The whole thing is a mess," complained Fulford. "The market is down five or six points.

TIV went with it. If it goes much further, I'll have to pay to give it away."

"You should worry about that little thing!" said Nell. "You'll soon be losing your job."

MacKellar stared at Simon. "Thunder, Simon! And you're just married!"

Wyeth turned from his desk. "Speaking of wives, Simon," he observed, "may I say that the lady we met last night is a lovely and well-favored person."

The others joined in endorsing this sentiment—which was pleasant to Simon. But for some reason it was not pleasant to have Wyeth say it.

CHAPTER III

THAT afternoon it occurred to Simon that possibly his Aunt Albina had returned from her trip. People do return from trips in such incredibly short times. One no sooner gets them carefully allocated to some intricately distant spot, than they upset all calculations by appearing suddenly upon the street corner.

At five o'clock he had the pleasantly domestic experience of calling Doris to say that he would be a few minutes late for dinner. And Doris, feeling the domesticity, said: "Where are you going?"

"To my Aunt Albina's."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I usually do go once in a while."

"And does a few minutes," she persisted, still maliciously conjugal, "mean an hour?"

"No—ah—absolutely no."

"And you are certain you have told me quite the truth?"

"Of course. I—I ——"

He was astonished to hear her laughing. Women were inconceivable. They laughed in the

midst of a complete span of seriousness. "It's all right with me," she concluded.

Simon had always considered it a pleasant walk to the house where his aunts lived. This afternoon, however, he harbored an unexplained sense of guilt. His feeling was, however, that if he tactfully avoided reference to Doris, it would be unnecessary to say why it was that he had not told them of the new arrangement at his house.

He entered the English-basement vestibule of his aunts' house. The aunts objected to the English-basement entrance as modern and wholly wrong in principle, but had never been able to agree as to how it should be modified. He pressed the bell, noting over the button a card neatly fastened with a thumb-tack saying "Peddlers and Solicitors Not Desired."

Aunt Albina herself came to the door. The absence of the female whose duty it was to open the portal was a sign of intense disturbance in the household. "We've had such a trying day. When our maid is out either Agnes or I have to answer the door-bell. It seems that no one but book-agents call—in spite of our card saying they are not desired."

Simon was not quite sure whether this speech carried absolution to him for having brought her to the door. He entered the long room which occupied the front of the second floor, where he

found Agnes seated in a small rocking-chair without arms, suitable for knitting. Her needles clicked automatically about the rim of a cylindrical thing, which shaped itself, apparently without human direction, into a stocking or a cap or possibly a sweater. Simon had the fleeting thought that perhaps the fascination of knitting lay in the keen desire to discover what the product would be when finished.

The aunts squared themselves away to entertain him. "You visit us seldom," said Albina.

"I go out seldom."

"That's ill-advised. You should see people and absorb some of the enlightenment and sophistication of a large city."

The glint on a facet of this idea interested him. "But is there a more *unsophisticated* spot than a great city?"

"Why ——" gasped Albina.

"Of course they do know where the street-cars go and where the moving-picture places are. But they don't approve of knowledge unconnected with their little island or not published in their newspaper. The purple grackle in the park is simply a bird to them and the sign on the tree saying *Ulmus Americana* doubtless a patriotic motto ——"

The aunts listened patiently. Simon was so queer. One had to be so tactful with him.

"And," said Albina, sweetly, not losing control of the situation, "have you, Simon, no best girl?"

Simon was disappointed. He would have liked to talk on the other subject. "You need," Albina continued, "a woman's influence—a woman to jar you out of your rut. You are so—unusual."

"Unusual?"

"Yes—ah—different."

That matter had been brought to his attention many times. "You feel that acquaintance with a lady would tend to make me more orthodox."

"Yes."

"Marriage perhaps."

Agnes spoke. "Of course, Simon, you couldn't expect the average woman ——"

"Agnes!"

"I simply wanted to warn Simon ——"

"I think you were tactless. There certainly must be *someone* who would be willing to marry Simon."

"I am not quite sure I share your optimism," said Simon.

Agnes endeavored to make up for her lack of tact. "How nice it would be if Simon could stay for dinner," she said to Albina.

"Yes. What a pity it's Thursday."

Simon saw no disadvantage in its being Thursday. But Albina explained: "Our waitress is not here Thursday afternoons and it is not our custom

to have dinner guests then. Of course an up-stairs girl can wait upon table, but Agnes and I are so acutely conscious that she is an up-stairs girl and so nervous lest she do something *unusual*. With a guest we should be simply distrait."

Simon had a dim recollection of their dinners as a ritual of plates. Meat appeared but vaguely—due to the fact that certain writings discouraged its too plentiful use. Starch-bearing vegetables were barred. Legumes were not congenial to the ladies' palates. It was puzzling that such slim feasts must be served by a specialist.

"How dependent," Simon began, hopefully, thinking to interest them, "we are upon the institutions of our modern life. A modern Robinson Crusoe cast upon a desert island would require a retinue of several hundred to sustain life. A medical practitioner, a tonsillar specialist, a dietitian, a dentist, an X-ray photographer, a root-canal specialist, an exodontist, a chiropodist and so on. Without at least these, life could scarcely persist. Strange, isn't it?"

Albina smiled indulgently. "Your vocabulary contains many large words. Do you," she experimented, seeking a topic of conversation, "intend to remain forever in your stifling iron office?"

"Forever's a long while."

"Have you no ambitions, no desire for achievement?"

"To learn more—be efficient."

"You are always trying to learn things—things that never seem to be of value to you. Your head must be a forest of facts."

That was it. His head was stuffed with facts, most of which would be of little value. He thought of it on his way home.

In his office he held a position whose chief requirement was industry. He had filled his mind fruitlessly with an understanding of manufacturing processes, marketing problems, the case for and against their product and so on—knowledge quite without his sphere. His possession of it was viewed with indifference, if not actual disapproval, by those above him, who considered that his requirement was to do nicely the work that was laid out for him and not to endeavor to understand.

"And how did you enjoy the aunts?" Doris asked.

He was not cheerful. "They make me feel so microscopic."

CHAPTER IV

HE was surprised to find that Doris sympathized with him in his long-range admiration for Faulkner. She encouraged him to talk. He told her some of the things he had been thinking, mentioning the possibility that he might lose his position.

"The thing that grieves me," she said, "is that so many hundreds—not all with as simple needs in life as yours—have become dependent upon this one man, and will now come to grief because he has."

There was an unexpected sincerity in this, indicating that her heart was able to feel for things outside its own circle of interest. This discovery interested—stirred him. He could not realize that the mild thrill of it was due to the fact that the heart was open momentarily only to him.

When the clock had struck the very late hour of nine or ten, she left him, going lazily up the narrow stair. From the sound—or the lack of sound—he knew that she had stopped by the window at the head of the stair, which looked out over the jumbled prospect of yards and fences. For a long while she seemed to be standing there. At length she called him.

She did not turn as he stood beside her. Her continuing gaze was a gesture—an invitation. The moon fell on white-topped chimneys, the glistening eaves, the smooth squares of snow between the fences. In the shadows hung mysterious darkness from which every detail had been eliminated. An unimportant hollow square it was behind the buildings on four streets. It slept in non-urban quiet, while not far away into the vague sky rose the lighted office tower, never sleeping, where toilers struggled day, dusk and early dawn.

Through a rift in the canyon glowed the bright street beyond—contemptuous of the night. It turned back unobserved the tiny wattage of the moon, shutting such mere loveliness to areas where the city piled its boxes. The obsolescent, pre-Victorian moon! which these Brobdingnagians cast aside.

“See,” she said, “there is a moon, even in the city.”

It thrilled him far beyond the power of the small pleasant picture to thrill, that she wished to share her enthusiasm with him. All of his own emotions were embedded deep within him. He was conscious concerning them to the point of embarrassment. Hers were spontaneous—open to view. When some chord in her was softly stirred by some intangible thing, such as this

night, she must share that appealing thing with someone else. She did not fear lest she would not be understood. She knew.

Simon sat before the fire thinking of her. She was changing. The constant use of her best company English had seemed to fix it as a habit. The argot of the mill was falling away. Or was he simply becoming accustomed to it?

While he was thinking this, Wyeth, sauntering through the Octurus, stopped Dr. Saul. "Wasn't it you," he asked, "who was telling me about the ladies in the circus who purveyed whiskey and other obsolescent liquids to the thirsty rich?"

"Yes. Ladies always dressed in black. Well-formed, athletic women and—quite gay, I take it. Think you have found one?"

Wyeth made a modest gesture. "Shouldn't be surprised," he admitted.

CHAPTER V

WERE one a producer of fiction and as such subject to the scrutiny and rebuke of reviewers, one would think twice before selecting and setting down these particular incidents in Simon Haldane's life. For it is a well-known fact that estimable young women do not casually drop in to abide with estimable young men; or if one of aforesaid young women does so drop in, said young man instantly, in the manner of the lady and gentleman in the French barometer, goes out.

However, since this is merely a true tale, concerned with the reaction of a retiring young man to a lurid swoop of fate, it is more pleasant and exciting to take the event just as it occurred. If any inquiring soul should write to ask this chronicler whether under similar circumstances he himself would have permitted the estimable young lady to abide in his house, in preference to sending her to the Grace Darragh Hotel, the Ruth Regained Mission, the Interstate Foundation or any of the various agencies where female charm is supposed to be annulled by having plenty of it all in one spot, no answer will be forthcoming. One learns, through careful and minute study of the remote sex, that when one of them has fully

decided upon a certain matter, the male man is free to devote his powers of deciding to other matters. Therefore, if Simon's lady had decided to remain ——

But that will develop. Suffice it to say that on Saturday morning Doris observed, with becoming if unusual meekness, "Would it be convenient for me to stay until Monday evening?"

As easily as that. Would it be convenient? And, Mrs. Grundy glaring in at the window notwithstanding, Simon gave his august permission——quite eagerly.

It seemed a small thing—so natural and in sequence that he was not at all disturbed, but put his letter methodically in the band of his hat, as was his custom, so that he would not forget to mail it. Yet there was a metamorphosis going on in him as a result of these strange events of his life. He sometimes thought he was growing more and more human. Yet she did not allow him to think so.

"I see you are wearing your tin suit," she said, pleasantly.

Frequently her remarks puzzled him.

"If," she continued, "you permit your clothes to obtain that metallic sheen, how can you expect girls upon the street to gaze after you ——"

Girls to gaze after him! It was one of the things he knew nothing about. At the office he

had heard of ladies—absolutely invisible to him—who smiled at one as one passed by, who might even whisper pleasantly in a crowded car or touch one's hand to disseminate the information that they existed and desired human companionship.

"But I never see them," he said.

She explained. "They are there, behind a veil that separates you from them. They adore conversation. They love it so much that when a strange man on the street lifts his hat to them, they tuck a hand under his arm and rush off to eat a portion of chicken *à la king* with him."

"That's food, rather than conversation."

"One calls for the other."

"I am too awkward and serious," he said, "to be aware of these things."

"Who knows? Some day there will be a change. Some day they will see that this seriousness of yours is just an affectation—a pose. And then you will have flappers flocking after you. You can't always fool the world into believing you are serious."

He was never quite sure whether she was talking to amuse him or whether to amuse herself at his expense. "Even now," she concluded, "I note a brightness in your eye. Any day you may expect this miracle to happen. Let me put a flower in your buttonhole before you go. Possibly this is the day."

He seemed to feel a change in himself—a lightness of step, a lightness of heart. The view of a distant mirage soon to vanish stimulated him. Did others—did she—notice that?

Yet he remembered someone had said we always imagine we are different from the men we were yesterday. That the faults of the past have merged into the virtues of the present. While all the time the same unchanged person exists and blunders along.

The thrill of a lifetime came to him as he turned into Severn Street.

He had noticed the girl—noticed her perfunctorily, as he would have viewed a telegraph pole on the corner and forgotten it. She was attired in fur coat and thin stockings. He remembered pleurably MacKellar's axiom that stenographers (and other rich) wore shiny hose and furry coats, while the poor wore furry hose and shiny coats. That was probably the only reason that the existence of this siren remained in his mind two seconds after his back had been turned upon her. Then the voice, thrilling, startling. Miraculous, stirring sound.

"Say, Mister."

No other man was near. He could be the only person for whom this blandishment was intended. "Say, Mister." What beautiful words! How that pleasant voice carried on the chill air!

Here was a pursuer who knew what she wanted and called out clear on the winter morn. And he was the pursued. Here was the adventure. "Say, Mister."

Doris had remarked that one day the change would come, that one day they would cease to regard him as a serious old fellow who saw nothing but the pavement as he walked along. Here was the first evidence.

There was nothing to do but to hurry—away from the girl. The thrill was there, it was imprisoned in his breast, never to be forgotten. But he did not know what to say to the lady.

He put on a full burst of speed. He had visions of her increasing her stride. He did not know what was customary in such cases. But he would take no chances. Possibly she was gaining on him. At any moment she might slip her hand through his arm—and what did he know about the process of going somewhere to order chicken *à la king*?

This popularity was stirring but it had its embarrassments. He turned cleverly down an intersecting street, and then through a small alleyway, arriving again on another thoroughfare. With mingled feelings of relief and regret he noted that he had eluded his fair pursuer.

For a moment he paused there upon the street-corner, indiscretion hot in his blood. The tin-

gling joy of achievement held him silent, awed, oblivious of the hurrying city that churned by him. His wagon had been tethered unexpectedly to a fast-moving star and, following a dizzy course, he had attained adventure.

As he paused there a second startling thing—a corroboration—happened. Two girls, arm in arm, came giggling behind him. He was in a state bordering on panic when they wheeled about in front of him, made a pretense of looking over his head and nodded to each other.

“It’s a bet!” they said, and, waving their hands to him in the most abandoned way, they ran laughing across the street.

What did it mean? What should he have said? This was no doubt a cabalistic sign. If he had known the precise return to it, he would have found a hand under either arm. Not that he regretted it. But it would have been pleasant to have been sophisticated.

Here were two adventures. There must be something about him. He was developing. He walked along with squared shoulders and—possibly it was only a fancy—the world seemed to look at him. Everywhere, among the throng, people returned his cheerful glance.

Then, in the midst of sunshine, the dark moment! A man touched his sleeve. Simon turned to him—this iconoclast, this breaker of

dreams—as if expecting new adventure. The man was smiling, unashamed of his sabotage.

“Excuse me, sir, but you have a letter in the band of your hat.”

It was true. The ridiculous message, white, arresting, still plumed the hat’s ribbon. Hot blood—not the blood of adventure—rushed to his cheeks. He dared not look at the man.

Ignominiously he sought again the side street. And, when he emerged in an entirely different spot, he thought the passers-by still smiled.

CHAPTER VI

HE arrived at the office indignant at himself. He had given way to an unbecoming exhibition of pride, strutting the streets with the idea that he had somehow come by a quality of charm, whereas as a matter of fact he had merely been an unconscious comedian.

He could not but feel, however, that while the illusion lasted it had been worth the later humiliation. That was the strange thing. What manner of person was this Simon Haldane, who took pleasure in striding down the thoroughfares believing he was being ogled by all the coquettes in the city? That was no admirable matter. But the memory of what he had thought he had been was pleasant—it gave a link with normal people—like Wyeth.

But he must never again make such a fool of himself.

When Trundle sent for him he was still in this one-third exulting, two-thirds chastened mood. He was humbled—but then he had been humbled many a day. This had been a glimpse of the world through a rent in the veil.

Trundle did not look up when he entered. That was a trick of his. Invariably, when one

approached him, he was writing something or reading something. The inference was that there was a golden thread of thought spinning which must not be snapped. Simon found himself, on this occasion, blasphemously wondering whether there was really any urgency to the sentences he wrote or whether it was merely to keep Simon there, awaiting his august pleasure.

Trundle at length deigned to admit his existence. He shot forth a glance like a steel drill. "Mr. Haldane," he observed, with a biting courtesy indicating rebuke, "you are the man who is responsible for sending out the bid on that Kansas group, are you not?"

The "are you not" was also indicative of reprimand. In rubbing in the faults of his subordinates, Mr. Trundle became pedantic by way of emphasizing the gulf that existed between him and fallable mankind.

Simon admitted that he had sent out the bid.

"And you were cognizant of the fact that it is not customary in this office to offer any bids except upon the specification requirements?"

"Yes."

"Yet you sent in two bids—upon two different bases."

"Yes."

"Mr. Haldane, that is lowering the dignity of this office."

Haldane did not concur, but he had no intention of being led into a discussion of the matter.

"I did not follow up this transaction. I am always erroneously thinking that there are some small details I can trust to my subordinates. In the future I see I shall have to visé everything. Everything!"

The subordinate did not foresee how he could come out well in an argument here either, and remained silent. His silence seemed to ruffle Trundle.

"What explanation have you to offer?" he stormed.

Simon felt the weakness of his position. What wild impulse was it that had persuaded him, a hireling of this great company, to oppose his will against the company's will? He, the worm taking on wings, had flown into the flame.

"I thought it was best. I used my own judgment," he replied, lamely.

Mr. Trundle rapped on the desk smartly. "Never use your own judgment, Haldane. Never!"

Simon caught his breath. Accustomed as he was to stinging remarks, the lash of this fell upon the quick. To be told his judgment was of no value to the Appalachian! A humiliating flush burned his cheeks. Yet he had committed the error. He deserved the castigation.

"Consider in what an embarrassing position you have placed me. For years the Appalachian Steel has prided itself on soliciting business in a conservative and dignified manner. It has been famous for that fact. Now I am placed in the unenviable position of admitting that we are so eager for work that we will descend to any depths of cut-throat salesmanship."

Again Simon restrained himself, from pointing out that the company *was* eager for work. Instead he said:

"You are not bound by my figure. Our certified check covers only the work as under the specifications. I will write acknowledging the error to be mine and withdrawing the figure."

"No, no," exclaimed Trundle, hastily, "we have accepted the work—on the—on the basis of your modified proposal."

Accepted it! Simon repeated the words. The blood rushed again to his cheeks—not this time in humiliation. He could have counted back years to the time when he had been angry. Self-repression, self-abasement had dammed up his blood year upon year, keeping what little there was of fury safely walled in in its corner of his mind. When one of those stones was wrenched loose it let forth a burning stream adown his soul. Criticism he accepted daily, meekly, when he thought it was deserved. But injustice —

"Trundle," he shouted, "Trundle ——" The thing was sweet to him. They would discharge him now, but he would have the fullness of his fling. In fact he could not have done otherwise—his rage carried him on.

"—you call me here to reprimand me, so you can uphold the discipline over your pack. . . . The breaking of a rule must be punished even if its breaking results to your advantage. . . . Last night you thanked the Lord on your knees that you could accept the proposal I sent in. You needed that business. . . . New York would have blown you up if this contract had not raised you to your quota"

Trundle rose—white to the lips. "Go to your desk."

"And now," cried Simon, wondering how he ever thought of anything so clever to say, "you will be little enough to fire me. Little—enough."

He collided with the jamb of the door as he departed.

"Little enough," he called triumphantly through the opening, and retired dizzily to his desk, trembling painfully, a devastating fever in his face.

Nell stared at him—aghast. "Simon!" she let fall, incredulously, "angry!"

CHAPTER VII

WHEN his spirit contracted at length to its normal and the stone slid back once more into the wall that held his reserve of hot blood in its proper restricted spot, he was dimly aware that he had been ill advised—that, not having practiced the art of swinging righteous indignation round his head, he had been unable to perform the feat skillfully. There was in him regret, hanging low on the horizon. And yet—a certain sweet satisfaction in having been right in the matter of the estimate that no amount of regret could taint.

The expected discharge did not come immediately, as may have been expected. It was some satisfaction to him to know that the delicate piece of work he was now engaged upon would make it highly improbable that Mr. Trundle would act precipitously. Mr. Trundle believed unreservedly in rewards and punishments—especially punishments—but he believed also in having as much embarrassing and difficult work as possible done by subordinates—and finished by them.

In addition Trundle was called before noon to New York by telegram. The telegram was so ur-

gent that he did not go home to supervise personally the packing of his bag, nor did he stop to make the customary oration to Wyeth in turning over to him for a few hours the impressive dignity and heavy responsibility of acting in his stead. He telephoned his home, called a taxi and was gone.

The reason for this urgency became apparent later. When the office force flowed out to luncheon, they were met with the explanation printed in flamboyant type in the midday paper.

Faulkner had embezzled immense funds belonging to the Appalachian Steel.

In guarded, libel-proof sentences the crime of the great financier was made clear. No one knew how many millions of dollars, properly belonging to widows and orphans, had been misappropriated. It is a strange feature of our financial system that the stock of companies suffering loss by disaster, failure or embezzlement is found to be almost exclusively in the hands of widows and orphans.

It was generally known that the directors of the Appalachian had given Faulkner authority to acquire control of the Erie Steel Company, using certain funds of the former for the purpose. Indications now were that, though he had used the money, he had never purchased the control.

At the very beginning of his campaign to buy

in the Erie, the news of what he was about to do had leaked out. Others acting on the knowledge began to buy also and those holding the stock showed reluctance to part with it. The result was that shares normally selling at forty went to a hundred. Apparently, Faulkner, perceiving that he had not the funds to press through the coup at these prices, had given up the effort.

But the large sum of money that had been borrowed upon the credit of the Appalachian to pay for the stock of the other company! What had become of this? The state of Faulkner's accounts gave no clue. The return of his daughter—trace of whose party had now been had in Mexico—would clear up this matter. Meanwhile, a conjecture was that he had invested, through several obscure brokers, the whole sum in Texas Imperial Valley stock and had been wiped out.

All this, vague and inconclusive though it was, was painful to Simon. Old C. P. had been a definite influence in his life—he was a star to which he had hitched his wagon. It was with a sense of personal defeat that he saw the star hurtling downwards.

His position with the Appalachian was worth nothing now. If the failure of the Appalachian did not set him adrift, Trundle would. That was not vital. He could find another position—in

fact they had offered him a position in the company he had visited at Buffalo. But the other was a matter of faith. He had regarded this man as great of mind and great of heart, and the man had misappropriated funds intrusted to him. That was not easy to bear.

Simon was accustomed to find solace, during his moments of depression, in the books that stood or lay, according to their bulk, on the shelves beside his fireplace. The folio of Prentice, too large to be held easily, afforded greatest companionship in the hours of tribulation. Its rich and lovely title-page, unconsciously ironical, dedicated its priceless contents—with her gracious permission—to Doña Maria Christina then Queen Regent of Spain, whose chiefest claim to immortality would seem to be her name upon that page. Through this book the mediocre splendors of the Spanish Renaissance rose high. The author's pencil, selective, understanding, covered with sentiment and romance the fitful efforts of the Castilian builders.

Next to that he liked the book of drawings by the man Nash. He loved the carved stairways of the time of Elizabeth, resplendent with tapered balusters, tiny arches and heraldic device. He loved the mullioned windows, the leaded casements.

When he looked at these volumes he thought

windows. His profession was windows. His working days were concerned with the marketing of big window frames, stamped out by pattern, following stock sizes, studied to give the greatest area of glass for the smallest cost of production, appallingly efficient, overpoweringly ugly.

In his books windows were not like that. They had charm and loveliness. He who was spending his life—conscientiously, ploddingly—to make the world uglier could at least look at the pictures of old time, before civilization in its mad rush had brought in the vile word efficiency.

He was conscious of disloyalty toward Mr. Faulkner when his mind turned into that channel. For Faulkner, in spite of his contribution to human comfort, valued this accidental altruism less than its tangible results in money. He strove for power. Naturally, therefore, he measured success by dollars and cents.

Whereas, Simon reflected, wealth is no measure of success. Everyone, of course, knew that. Knew that the rich, if any different at all, were less happy than their fellows; yet strove wildly to accumulate riches. They strove to obtain motor-cars so that they need not walk, and the motors gave them avoirdupois and high blood-pressure. They strove to obtain wealth for their children and the wealth made the children grow up fat of body and mind. They hoped for idleness and the

idleness brought them divorces. Wealth, the world conceded, was nothing. Yet it remained its chief ambition.

It was only such sheltered souls as he who considered contentment as any index of success in life. Contentment was accomplishment—which meant that one made a fair bargain as he went along. Accomplishment meant giving over the counter unequal return for what one gathered in. The Appalachian, for instance, did not give over the counter equal return—they made the public pay because the Appalachian had the product. They did not attempt to accomplish more for the public than the latter's impeded vision demanded.

Simon tried to give fairly over the counter. His fellows considered him a dupe. In return for a small salary and smaller appreciation, he gave long hours, abnormal interest, enthusiasm. That did not distress him. Getting the smaller end of the bargain did not in itself spell defeat. It could be taken as evidence that he himself had not been unfair.

"Talk to me, Simon," said a voice.

He detached himself slowly from his reflections and looked up to realize that she also was there. It should not have been at all in the nature of a surprise, since she had been there ever since dinner, sitting on the couch, her feet crossed before her, doing some sort of solitaire catspaw with a

white thread and a double-pointed bobbin thing. If one looked closely it could be seen that this resulted in a narrow lace-like string. This he had been led to believe was called "tatting," a product which seemed to have no value, but possibly by the use of the proper bobbin could be turned into thread again.

It was pleasant to look at her. Indeed, it was pleasant to have her there, even though one did lose her occasionally behind the mist of one's cogitations.

"I said," she repeated, "talk to me. Don't sit there and think at me."

"The things I talk about," he replied, slowly, "are prosy. I bore you—everyone."

"I want to be bored. I want to hear a noise different from my own meditations. I do nothing but think, think—wait, wait. The clock goes around slowly. The day seems never to come to evening. The night never seems to come to dawn. The things I think, I think over and over. There is no change, no decision, no end."

"Yes," he said, as she paused. He felt that she was about to confide something, but fumbled awkwardly for a word of encouragement.

She drew a sigh and went on with her spider-webbing. "You are not talking," she reminded him.

He groped confusedly among his thoughts.

"Have you," she asked, "an ambition?" Flood-gate opener! Used by all women to blast loose any clog, obstruction, or conversational ice-jam. She smiled at her own simplicity.

This was a matter he had frequently considered. "If I had a large—a heroic ambition," he explained, "it would be to leave to another generation—you see, I said this was a heroic ambition—a sentiment rather than a reality."

She held the bobbin thing poised for a second, her brows inquiring.

"Think of the joy in this book on my knees—which is just sentiment. And think of the annoyance and frayed nerves that result from the telephone and the taxicab."

"They're progress, however."

"Yes, progress. The planning and contriving by a few great minds to make planning and contriving by the multitude unnecessary! To have your laundry, your cooking, your light, your heat, your disced music, your grief perhaps, and later your prayers performed by a machine made in Illyria, New York! To abolish the need for a brain and even for the circulation of the blood."

"Go on, Simon. You have a mediæval mind."

"I suppose so," he admitted. "Our race," he said, rising to put his big book in a vacant spot in the bookcase, "is on the way to be exterminated by its own cleverness. We have handed

over to physicians our power to resist disease. We can't see without oculists, can't function until tonsils, adenoids and appendix have been pruned, can't reproduce the race without hospitals. We are a thin-armed, coughing, bespectacled, germ-fearing multitude, carrying a throat-spray in one pocket and an individual drinking-cup in the other. In the year two thousand and five a nation bent on our destruction will have but to obtain control of our supply of throat-sprays, nasal douches, individual drinking-cups and sanitary soap-sprays and our germs will eat us up overnight."

The black bobbin flew, the white hand performed an operation too quick for the eye to follow, the little finger extended itself gracefully and withdrew. The veriest fraction of a pause and then the motion again. Perhaps, indeed, it was slightly different in the swift overlapping of threads. The interminable knitting wove mainly a pleasing memory of swift, slender fingers, of graceful preoccupation, of gentle repose. What did the tangible product matter?

"*Continuez*," she smiled, "I am still bored, Simon."

He knew that his talk was prosy and solid, that she needed thistle-down. "My hand is heavy," he conceded. "If I were a youth who could discourse nothings, weave a pattern of slender words

out of nearly nothing as you do there with your fingers ——”

The fingers stopped. Her eyes were round, with every intent of seriousness. “Make love, you mean, Simon.”

He flushed. “I think I know nothing about that.”

She dropped her bobbin and thread with the air of one who could stand no more of that sort of avocation, rearranged her legs so that one of them rested on the floor and the other somewhere beneath her, raised her arms till the sleeves fell devastatingly to her shoulders, affected not to yawn and, having slowly lowered the arms, folded the hands loosely in her lap.

“Never in love, Simon?”

“No.”

“It’s so hard to make you talk. I have just asked the world’s most famous leading question and you answer with two letters. Was there never a girl? Have you no memory of moonlight nights, of ——”

It was Simon’s earnest desire to be truthful. “Ah,” he thought aloud, surprising himself, “a moonlight night and the smell of honeysuckle!”

She sighed purposefully. “Sentimental Simon!”

The blood seemed all in his face. He was warm, uncomfortably warm. The treasured memories

of his youth he was unaccustomed to bring to light. They were not orthodox—of course they never could have been. He had always been Simon Haldane.

"Sentimental," he repeated, embarrassed yet a little inclined to be defensive. "I suppose so. I treasure the memory of walking down a white road in the moonlight, breathing in the odor of the hedge. Even to-day honeysuckle ——"

"But the girl."

"Yes, there was a girl. She was just an idea to me." He felt around for words, uncomfortable in laying bare his feelings. "She represented to me youth, I think, and the—the intoxication of spring. She and the moon and the honeysuckle were a sort of distant symptom of romance. They," he said, with difficulty, "they thrilled me."

She nodded. There was something in her attitude that indicated she was following his halting disclosure.

"I do not even remember whether she had charm—perhaps I should not have been able to judge—or intelligence or whether she said funny things. I remember a gossamer scarf that blew in my face. She had it round her arms—which seemed, though I did not know, pleasantly cool. Had I touched her arm or hand it would have been to complete the picture—to make perfect

the play in which we two were characters. Lord knows I was never bold enough to touch her. I would sit in the soft night and listen to her voice. And how bored she was with me! ”

With an easy motion she rose from the couch and sauntered to the fire. Her slipper dropped upon the floor and a foot extended to the blaze.

“It sounds rather quaint and pleasant as you say it. But pictures and sweet odors are too frail for me.”

She laughed and spread out her arms—white, pleasing of entasis. “The man that loves me, Simon, has to approach on high speed. I don’t mind the smell of honeysuckle and the moon for a background. But he must hold me as though he never meant to let me go.”

What might have been a beckoning gesture to other men was safe with Simon. One could talk of embraces without the next second finding arms about one. She smiled at the picture.

“My plot for romance is not like yours,” she went on. “I don’t want to be a Watteau shepherdess against a background of fleecy clouds and a field of forget-me-nots.”

Who could fulfill the specifications of this charming, far-off person? he questioned himself. Someone with infinite charm of manner, with grace and easy speech.

“Wyeth,” he said, aloud, suddenly.

She laughed—a little startled. Her glance sought his.

“He has a way with him,” she murmured, following quickly his unspoken line of thought. He thought she laughed more than was necessary.

Abruptly—she slipped her foot into her shoe. The bobbin and the length of purposeless product she thrust into a tiny bag. She glanced over the table in search of a magazine, vacillated between two and at length chose.

“And now,” she observed, in the manner of one proposing a leap from Brooklyn Bridge, “if you wish to kiss me, you’d best hurry. I’m going to bed.”

Simon laughed. She was always absurd.

CHAPTER VIII

ON Monday the efficiency experts visited the office.

Life, thought Simon, was not formerly so crowded with events. On Saturday there had been the party at the Hollises. Doris had said that she would prefer not to go in the street-cars and Wyeth, hearing of it, had taken them in his automobile. Simon, sitting in the back seat, had watched her with a certain sense of pride. Out of her tiny luggage had come a simple evening dress. There was, to one of Simon's inexperience in party-going, rather a startling area of her visible. But it was becoming.

For a while there had dwelt in the window of the art dealer's on Severn Street a portrait in oil of a young woman. There was the point of her shoulder which caught the glint of the lamplight—not the sharp circle that appears on a polished surface—but a mere hint, a breath, as it were, of light that caressed it and seemed to be gone when one looked again.

The light from his lamp fell thus upon the curve of Doris's arm. He was not certain whether it was quite proper for him to feel admiration for this living thing. But if she showed it ——

At the simple little party he enjoyed vicariously a brilliant social success. He was rather ashamed of his egotism in being puffed up because of her charm and lightness. It would have been more modest to take her accomplishments as a matter of course. He was really becoming conceited about her.

On Sunday the snow came again—a damp heavy fall, sometimes almost a rain, that weighed down the branches of the trees. In the evening she expressed a desire to see the effects of the storm.

In the park near by it was moonlight. The clouds had floated away and the moon hung round as a teacup over them. Rain and snow had cemented themselves to the limbs of the trees. Each twig wore a glove of ice with a line of white resting upon it—like a very elaborate dessert.

She could not resist the temptation to put the cool ice to her lips, making an unmannerly trough of her tongue to encircle it. He spoke of the matter of germs, but she made some atrocious jest concerning the known invincibility of that part of her that projected between her lips.

It was a beautiful night. The moonlight, reflected again from the expanse of snow, made the term night inapt. They could read the print on the paper that blew across their path. It was as if a special flood-light had been turned on to

grace this unusual performance of the elements. Laden with their wintry fruit, branches drooped heavily. Cedars bowed, their snowy tops touching the ground. Interlocking white twigs formed lacelike tracery.

Bright eyes—bright cheeks—half-whispered exclamations—demands to know if he did not think this or that detail of the panorama charming (to which he replied invariably, "Very pretty! Very pretty indeed!")—investigating hands in the branches of the trees—startled drawing back as frightened birds whirled from shelter to seek the chill comfort of the bare trees. This her reaction to the night.

Somewhat tame adventure to those accustomed to jazz bands and food between dances, ample red on the cheeks and ample white on ample shoulders. But that is the excitement that beats against one from without. The excitement that beats from within is another matter.

All in all, to Simon the days had seemed eventful.

Finally, the visit of the efficiency experts to the office. There were two of these creatures. One was absolutely the sort of person that could have been expected to appear in that capacity—tall, thin, solemn, with black-rimmed, owl-like spectacles. He had long investigating fingers, beady investigating eyes, an eagle nose of the investi-

gating type. He impressed one at once with the futility of attempting to conceal anything from him. The other spoiled the picture. He was plump, moon-faced, with several lines at the outer corners of his eyes that would have told heavily against him in a seriousness test.

The tall, thin man made a tall, thin speech. He told them that the Appalachian was to carry on. But that in view of recent developments it would be necessary to trim things. Every unnecessary expense, every wrong procedure, every piece of lost motion was to be eliminated. The speaker and his colleague had been engaged to do the eliminating. He peered through his owl-eyes and said that he hoped that the office force would assist them in every way.

During this oration the moon-faced one whittled the end of a match. At its conclusion Wyeth, as acting head of the office, accompanied by the chief bookkeeper and the sales-manager as entourage, led the visitors on a tour of the office.

The owl-eyed one bristled questions. His bony index finger moved about pointing, with the terrific assurance that nothing escaped him. His high-powered eye, missing no detail, drove the nervous office force to the point of hysteria. "Why do you use a hexagonal pencil?" "Why is your memoranda-pad on the left side of the desk?" "Why do you file behind the letter?"

"Why is this carbon paper in the waste-paper basket when it could have been used once again?"

"Why do you use that type of desk calendar?"

During the first half hour the fat one asked one question. "How do you keep track of new business—new prospects?"

Wyeth answered politely. "Most of our business," he said, not without a touch of pride, "is with the firm's established customers. Our product creates its own following."

After some time the moon-faced one again stopped whittling his match. "How about your cost data?" he asked, as though he had at last found something to say. "What percentage of your gross sales does it take to run the office?"

Wyeth was urbane. "Perhaps the bookkeeper—Mr. Williams, see if you can give this gentleman the information he desires."

"We don't keep our accounts in just that way," said Williams. "I will give you a copy of our annual statement."

"I have that. What I need is the cost, as compared with gross sales, of office, of employees, of supplies and so on. Something graphic."

"We could, of course, get that for you."

Nell Mangan touched the bookkeeper on the arm. "Simon," she said, "keeps a record that way. You remember him and Mr. Trundle had that argument about overhead last fall."

Simon, approached unexpectedly, hunted about wildly for his book—the little brown book. “Here it is,” announced Nell, taking it from beneath his blotter. The round man studied the tabulation carefully.

“That’s it,” he said. “Like to have a copy.”

When the thin investigator stopped at Simon’s desk, the latter made a pathetic showing. Wyeth was embarrassed, indignant. Haldane’s replies made the office appear ridiculous.

Simon could not, in a word, explain the system of his desk. Yes, that basket was supposed to have his Immediate Attention papers in it. But why was this standard price-list in the basket? Well, he was using it at the moment. And why did he have urgent letters stuck in the corner of his blotter instead of in the basket provided for them? Why did he have his stationery in the same drawer with his estimating data? Why a *straw hat* in the drawer?

Simon could have explained all these things if they had given him time. The straw hat was for days when there was a draft from the spiral stair behind him. As to his Immediate Attention basket, all the jobs no one else wanted were given to him, filling the basket so completely that he had to withdraw the most important so they would not be lost sight of under the weight of the others. He could have explained this if they had not been

so brisk—expecting one to answer pat pat right after the question mark.

“Let me see. This gentleman’s name is Haldane, is it not?”

“Yes,” said Wyeth.

“Hah! Mr. Trundle spoke of him. Haldane.” And wrote something in his book.

All day long the investigation continued. Simon, who understood their methods less and less as the work continued, grew more and more uncertain and nervous. His replies, when he was questioned, seemed never to be satisfactory to the thin man, who was microscopic in his thirst for exact information.

The fat person wandered around looking wise and now and then asking a question which Wyeth answered hastily or referred to someone else. At half-past four the fat man said, “Like to see the warehouse.”

Wyeth frowned openly. The office was due to close in half an hour and the warehouse was some distance away—on the other side of the river. The acting chief drummed his fingers against the knuckles of the other hand. As he glanced down the room an idea occurred to him.

“Haldane.” Simon rose. “Take this gentleman to the warehouse. Mr. Haldane,” Wyeth explained, “knows all about the warehouse.”

He left abruptly lest any other difficult request

be made, such as, for instance, that the acting chief accompany the party. Rejoining the active investigator, he led tactfully up to the suggestion that, since it was nearing closing time, the work be resumed on the morrow.

"My name," said the fat man, as he and Simon boarded a street-car, "is Deems."

Simon felt more at ease with this one, who seemed to be not so brisk and full of terms.

"Like this business?" asked Deems.

Simon wondered if he did. "Why," he replied, "I understand its elements. I have been shifted around through every department, so that most matters that come up are clear to me. Yes, I like it. I think one likes work he understands."

"H'm. Was Mr. Trundle a good chief?"

He thought it was rather strange of Deems to put it that way—in the past tense.

"No," was what he wanted to say.

"He has a reputation as an excellent administrator," politeness called upon him to reply.

"But you do not think so?"

These fellows were always reading what was in a fellow's mind. "I got only a worm's-eye view," he returned, uneasily. "Mr. Trundle made up his mind years ago about—many things."

"Which ought to have been decided yesterday—or to-morrow."

Simon felt that he was being led on, but there

was no way out of it without being untruthful. "That's my opinion. But, of course, I don't get as broad a view ——"

At their destination, Mr. Deems said, "What's the matter with the warehouse?"

"The *warehouse* is pretty good." Simon unconsciously italicized the word. Deems nodded.

Simon was at home here. The problems of storing and shipping had occupied much of his time. "The difficulty is in moving the sash. Sometimes they bend where the hook from the crane supports them. I have thought we ought to try an electric magnet such as they use in the steel shops for lifting iron plates."

"Have you suggested that?"

Simon nodded.

"I hope," said Deems, when they had looked around, "that my man finds some way of paring expenses here. This is a costly organization."

This Deems talked about the general aspect of things, in a way one could understand. "This branch," he continued, in the manner of one thinking aloud, "ought to be a gold mine."

There was a certain magnetism about him. When he looked at one his eyes were friendly. "Our business," Simon found himself saying, as if the other had invited discussion, "is the kind we have to go after. We send catalogues to architects and builders and, when the plans are ready,

we get the information and turn in a bid. People don't come to our offices to buy. If a consultation is necessary we visit them. We don't need an office in the down-town district. That is to say it doesn't get business."

Deems stopped short. "Where ought it be?"

Simon had gone further than he had intended. He was somewhat panic-stricken. Deems might laugh at him for his idea. But he said stoutly, "Here. Partition off this end."

Deems did not laugh. He considered the expanse of the warehouse. "How much do they pay for the down-town offices?" he asked presently.

Simon gave a figure. The efficiency man stroked his chin. He walked to the end of the building and returned pursing his lips. "Well," he remarked, by way of passing an opinion, "it's time to be getting back."

When Simon entered the house on Charlemagne Street, Doris greeted him with the news that Wyeth had called to see him and had left but a short time before. In the absence of the host, she had given him a cup of tea and had endeavored to entertain him. No, he did not leave a message. The business was not urgent. He would see Haldane in the morning.

"But," said Simon, presently, "he ought to have known that I had gone to the warehouse and would not return until late."

PART FOUR

SPRING

“Spring is a season of surprises. It is then that the dull trees, dull grass and bright Christmas jewelry turn green.”

— *Invercauld Calendar.*

CHAPTER I

"THE best way to find out about a man," thought Deems, "is to visit him at his home."

Following which advice to himself, he called Wyeth on the telephone and, from data thus obtained, set out to find, single-handed, Charlemagne Place. Being by nature and profession a bringer to light, he did not long permit the street to remain undiscovered. Simon, returning shortly after eight o'clock from a visit to the convalescent Brown child, was astonished and grieved to find Deems on the door-step.

Why didn't these explorers confine their unriddling to the hours of daylight? Didn't they ever have recreation and leisure? He was about to ask stiffly, "What can I do for you?" but, remembering that this was his house, invited the visitor in.

Doris was sitting on the couch. Against its flowered pattern her dark dress indicated the smooth lines of her figure intriguingly reposed. The gold of the fire overlaid the white of her skin and brought unexpected color to her hair. She looked up companionably. But at the sight of Deems her smile disappeared, the wide eyes nar-

rowed searchingly. Simon hastened to reassure her.

"Doris," he explained, "this is my friend Mr. Deems."

Her brow cleared. Wyeth had mentioned him as one of the investigators.

"Glad to meet you, Mrs. Haldane," said Deems.

Simon rather expected that Doris would presently disappear and leave him to the mercy of the investigator. But not Doris. She understood that this man had assumed a position of temporary importance with regard to Simon's company and should be kept contented. In such an emergency she had no intention of departing. She seated the guest strategically before the fire, and noting with quick eye the cigar in the visiting vest placed on the table a copper thing to receive ashes and a box of matches.

She seated Doris on the usual sofa with the usual foot curled beneath her in the usual manner and reached for the usual tatting.

What scene could be more domestic? The guest in billowy chair before the fire, drawing the red and gold band from his long cigar. The woman of the house abusy with her knitting, flatteringly a listener. The host comfortable and midstage. Mr. Deems blew a fragrant ring upward. It hung like a halo over them—a nicotine halo, but still

having a power to bless. Was not a wine called Benedictine?

At any rate Mr. Deems was comfortable and happy. Simon was relieved to find that he had no particular business to transact. He discovered that the cluster of lines at the corner of the guest's eyes were not misleading. The man actually laughed. It would never do for the long, lean man to learn of this, else Deems standing as an efficiency expert would be lost. There is nothing more inefficient and time-losing than laughter.

The guest made Doris laugh. There was something irresistibly contagious about Doris's lighter moods. A moment she was serious, the next the seriousness had dropped from her like a garment, leaving her dimpled, bubbling. It was a pleasant exhilaration for one to endeavor to affect this transformation, putting together, with malice aforethought, words and ideas with the deliberate purpose of seeing if a chance shot would bring the rainbow?

Simon was glad that a projected festivity at the MacKellars' house had caused her to stay a few days more. If she had gone to-day, as she had planned, he would have had to entertain Mr. Deems unassisted. And Mr. Deems, when alone with him, discovered too many things.

"You travel about a good deal?" Doris began, seeking broad classification.

Deems nodded. "Yes. Don't quite know where my home is. Sometimes I live with my brother in Buffalo. My brother is a politician. He is interested in capitalizing the indecision of the voter. Every year he decides for tens of thousands of them—takes a weight off their minds—provides candidates for them and then elects the candidates. A great humanitarian mission! He is a kindly person—a wholesale grocer by trade—who holds no office except possibly that of justice of the peace. But, like most politicians, his power for evil is staggering. A whisper to this man, who whispers to a second, and strange things can be done. There is a mediæval might there."

Deems flicked the ash thoughtfully from his cigar. "I believe he is a benevolent despot—at any rate, his wife is fond of him. Which brings me to a point," he said, turning to Doris, "how do *you* like this Haldane?"

Doris smiled. "Regular as a clock."

Deems sought information. "Do you like the job he has?"

"I don't like what he says about Mr. Trundle," she replied, bluntly. Simon was startled. He did not remember having spoken upon this subject. But then Doris had discovered so many things.

The visitor blew a ring of smoke. "I think you won't have to put up with Trundle any longer."

"He has been promoted?" asked Doris.

"No. But he will not be back."

Finally Mr. Deems said, "Thunder. It's ten o'clock," and made a gesture as if about to rise and depart. In fifteen minutes Doris was saying, "It's early yet." Fifteen minutes after that the guest took a firm grip upon himself and stood up.

"Going now. Fine time."

Doris thought of a phrase she was certain would please Mr. Deems. "Now that you have found the way," she said, "come again."

At the street-corner the efficiency man stopped to light his last cigar. "Fine, solid fellow, Haldane!" he said.

CHAPTER II

DORIS, humming softly, picked up a magazine. Simon locked the front door and, descending into the depths, made a terrible noise with the furnace. He glanced casually about his kitchen and put out the light. Entering the living-room he said:

“Bedtime.”

He waited, idly reading some paragraph in the newspaper that lay on the table. After a time he realized that she had not moved. He looked at her, a little puzzled.

“Put up your book, Miss Doris, and clear out of here. I have to cover that fire and put out the lights.”

“No can do, Simon,” she murmured, absently.

He sank resignedly into a chair. But a glimpse of her smile as she glanced quickly out of the corner of her eye arrested him. She really ought to be in bed. Dr. Saul had said — He held out his hand. “Give me the book, please.”

The reader met his eye with a dazzling look and, placing two fingers in his outstretched palm, went on reading. He sat there dazed, astounded, with the two fingers still in his hand. Finally he lifted them and returned them gently to the arm of her chair.

"Going to bed early," he said, haltingly, "is a talent. Unless you start you never accomplish it."

She continued to read. It was difficult to talk to one who did not listen. But he felt his responsibility. Dr. Saul had said she ought to have ten hours sleep each night. And, as everyone knew, women were temperamental. There had always to be a tiresome someone to remind them of their responsibilities. He touched her lightly on the shoulder.

She let the book descend slowly to her lap, her finger between the pages. Her glance was pleasant, inquiring.

"Well, Simon."

"Bed."

"Ogre! "

"Look at the clock."

She marked her place with the quill pen that lay on the table and put down the magazine. She glanced idly at the timepiece.

"See. It's eleven o'clock."

With the feather from the book she gently touched his lips, slightly moving its disconcerting edge.

"Are you going? "

The seriousness he knew was necessary for the situation was impossible against that disturbing pendulum that caressed him. He began to laugh

and was compelled to take the feather from her. She drew her mouth into a pout.

"Going?" he asked, masterfully.

"No. I've changed my mind." With the air of having just been on the verge.

"You *must* go, Doris."

She reached for her book. "Can you make me?"

The situation was difficult. He did not understand why she was making such a point of the matter. Were it not that he was right in principle he would have said no more. "It is possible that I could," he observed but felt that he was near to overstepping the bounds of truth.

She looked at him calmly. "Then I have to be forced."

He heard the warning voice in him that said "Simon, Simon." He knew, without listening to the voice, that he must be careful. But he could not keep on saying "When are you going? When are you going?" all the evening and have her reply placidly, "Never."

"Very well," he announced, firmly.

"Ah."

It was that monosyllable. That monosyllable indicating disbelief, ease of mind, disdain even. He felt weak and defeated. Yet he hated to acknowledge defeat. He moved toward her. She picked up a thread and laid it on his sleeve.

"Poor old Simon!" she murmured gently.

The stubbornness in him rose. Her tolerant smile drove all pusillanimous thoughts of caution from him. All his life he had been flouted, belittled, minimized. He would this time take the upper hand—if never again.

She caught her breath. Her eyes widened apprehensively. She did not recognize the man who approached firmly and, stooping slightly, swung her from her teasing ease. She did not scream, she would not protest. She had dared him, overestimating his reticence. She rested motionless upon the muscular rigidity of his arms while he tramped firmly up the stair. At her room door he dropped her precipitously, inelegantly, wordlessly, and fled.

Below, with flushed face and throbbing temples, he held his head in his hands—exhilarated but agonizingly ashamed.

CHAPTER III

IN her room, still dressed, she struggled with a great depression. This was Monday when things were at their worst. All the week long she waited for Monday and when Monday came—nothing. Why should she have come to bed when there was no fatigue in her—nothing but the same worry, the same discussion with herself of the thing that could not be discussed. If Simon had only let her stay there with him. Poor, dear Simon!

How much longer could she stay in the house without being found? Another week? Just one more week. One more chance. If this thing did not happen by then, she must go. Where? How? What difference did it make?

In the morning he was constrained. He dared not look at her but ate with his eyes on his plate. If he chanced, forgetting, to look, her returning glance drove him into retreat. When he took his hat to go, he stopped a moment before her. "Doris," he said, looking now into her face, "I'm sorry. I'm ashamed," and bolted from the house. She sat quite still at the table for a long while, lost in thought.

The office devoted two more days—two turbulent, nervous days—to the efficiency men. The tall, thin man had ceased to question Simon, a slight that filled Simon with a peculiar elation. Mr. Deems, whose mind had not the flea-like agility of his colleague's, would now and then seek a chair by Simon's desk to rest himself by whitening the end of a match.

His talent for resting, appearing amidst the agitation that had spread like eczema through the office, was soothing. Simon resented the activities of temporarily deranged folk as they rushed by, pushing behind his chair, poking him with the ends of blue-prints, running wildly through the papers on his desk in search of documents that were not there.

"Almost finished?" he asked, hopefully.

"Don't know. This business," he said, at length, taking a fresh match, "needs refertilizing."

"I beg your pardon," said Simon, politely.

"Like raising potatoes. You get a plot of ground clean and ready and immediately all the weeds in the country come and grow in it. Faulkner prepared the ground for this steel sash business and all these competitors have come and are growing in it. There is no remedy for that. Of course you can't patent a steel frame and sash. Old Adam invented that the same time Eve was

inventing the lip-stick. All you can do is to keep a step ahead of the competitors."

"We need variation," Simon agreed.

"You spoke. But what variation?"

"Windows," began Simon, on his favorite subject, "are used on other buildings besides factories."

Deems shut his knife and opened it again. "Believe I did read that somewhere."

"But we manufacture only for factories. We make a specialty of ugly windows for ugly buildings."

"Rough!"

"There is another field for us," continued Simon, hastily. "Look at that sliding-up-and-down window beside me. Sticks when you want to open it. Rattles when the wind blows. Has two homely rails across the middle. That's what causes divorces. Women looking out at beautiful flowers and getting hit in the eye by those rails; trying to make them look different by draping them with expensive hangings—with no luck. They think they need a change of husbands and all they need is a change of windows. Is that correct?"

"Trouble's afloat," agreed Deems, throwing away the match.

"I'll show you some books—real windows in them. The point is that someone in 1750 an-

nounced that sliding-sash were the only sash that were weather-tight and easy to open. We know that steel sash, which do not shrink, are both of these things in whatever style you make them. We ought to repeal the law about sliding-sash and give the world casements—to rest its eyes.”

Deems rose. “That company in Buffalo you said you went to see—they’ve just chipped the shell of that idea. I happened to be visiting a brother in Buffalo—he’s a politician there instead of working for a living—and I dropped in on that factory. But they haven’t the courage to push it. Wish you’d bring down those books.”

At the end of the following day the investigation closed. The thin man seemed at last to have worn himself down by the energy of his interrogations. He had the wearied look of one who has done his best. As for those upon whom the burden of answering his questions had fallen, their spirits sagged. They were able, with exemplary hospitality, to speed the parting guests.

“And now,” observed MacKellar, relieved, “there won’t be so much confusion a fellow can’t hear the five o’clock whistle.”

Simon was glad they were gone. And when Doris threw open the door of his house for him before he could put his key in the lock, that satisfaction in him at the course his life was taking

rose to a point somewhat higher than mere gladness.

He found that his view of Doris was not quite the same as it had been. Perhaps it was just the natural ebb and flow of one's regard for another person, but since their encounter when she had refused to retire at the proper moment he had felt a difference.

When she was dressed for the tiny festivity at the MacKellars, the light upon her shoulder no longer reminded him of a picture. He thought of this loveliness as of a living, moving thing. When he sat on the rear seat of Wyeth's automobile going to and returning from the party, he listened to the light exchange of conversation between Doris and the other man with a rising spirit of contention.

He did not deduce that it was jealousy. But the active and stirring appreciation of her charm, which in the beginning had been merely a humble gratefulness for her companionship, brought him a vague uneasiness.

When they had returned and Wyeth had gone, she was standing between him and the blaze of the fire, holding a silken foot to its warmth. The fire glinted on a stamped gold medallion. "New stockings," he said, involuntarily.

"I wondered," she said, "when you were going to notice any of my new things."

“New things?”

“This dress, for instance.”

“Is it new?”

“Bought it in the store at the corner.”

He wondered how the financial part of this transaction had been managed. But he did not ask. Instead he said: “I think it is very pretty.”

She moved suddenly, easily, and sat beside him. A rounded arm drawn through his. He felt, without embarrassment now, the touch of her finger on his hand, the touch of her shoulder against him. It was instead a consciousness of glorious content, as of one who stands in a soft breeze gazing at a starry night.

CHAPTER IV

THE first office day of the following week was an eventful day. The efficiency men returned, bringing with them the president of the company. The president, whose name was Clark, shook hands with everyone in the office and endeavored to be pleasant. But he did not dispel a general feeling of gloom. Rumors flew about that the office force was to be cut in a vicious manner.

Wyeth was in constant consultation with the visitors, calling from time to time for this or that paper or file. Tension rose. Wyeth, civil, urbane, quick of speech, was the only one to show no trace of it. He was making an impression upon the president. He had already fixed his status in the minds of the investigators. There remained only that this be confirmed by Mr. Clark.

Shortly after two o'clock, when the visitors had departed with the idea of returning the next morning, Wyeth rushed excitedly out into the large office.

"I have to report," he exclaimed, "that, although matters generally are still *in statu quo*, one thing has been settled. I have made good. Mr. Trundle, as you know, will not return. With that in view, I was suave, diplomatic." He made

a gesture with his hands. "I smoothed them with the nap of the goods."

He paused to light his cigarette. "That much is settled now," he said, modestly. "But, before final arrangements are made, I am to be sent on an inspection trip to Jacksonville. Florida in March! The president—sly boy—suggested that there was a place called Palm Beach ——"

"But the position. Are you to succeed Mr. Trundle?"

He touched his finger to his lips, cheerfully non-committal, and sought the telephone booth to share his high spirits with someone else. Somehow these high spirits depressed Simon. Whether it was the fact that his unexpressed antagonism against the man had filled him with prejudice, or simply because the high spirits were so little in accord with the responsibilities of the position that lay open before Wyeth, he did not decide. But he was depressed.

The president and the efficiency men returned shortly after four—somewhat unexpectedly. Simon was asked to conduct them to the warehouse. It was a taciturn and grave Simon who performed the service. He answered questions with few words, trying to conceal his low spirits. He stood in the pleasant sunshine wondering why he was not happy.

The same pleasant sunshine poured down upon

Charlemagne Place. It is doubtful if Simon were thinking of home. But if his mind's eye could have been projected thither for a fraction of a second he would have seen Doris carefully emerge from the house and carefully close the door behind her.

She was attired in hat and suit. At the corner of Charlemagne Place and Severn Street she was trying to appear inconspicuous by staring into the shop-windows. Yet from time to time she looked up expectantly.

A newsboy came shouting down the street. She made a pretense of being eager to purchase one of his sheets and stood by the shop-window reading as if she had found an item of unusual interest. But presently one saw that she was not reading but staring ahead, her mind far away.

At length she made a final gesture, as if indicating that she proposed to wait no longer. She turned her back to the wide street and began slowly to retrace her steps.

A voice. A quick step and he was beside her. She stopped with an effect of being startled. The paper dropped to the sidewalk.

"Who would have expected to see you here?" smiled Wyeth, his voice gently caressing.

She smiled. "Where else?"

"Are you walking?"

"Why not?"

Severn Street was gay in the winter sunshine. Fur coats, bright hats, smooth limousines contributed to a picture of richness. The sidewalk was crowded with youth—young girls laughing; boys parading, practicing poses of sophistication. They went in or came out of moving picture places, or shops where one bought ices and chocolates. There was an air of carnival about it.

"I feel as if I should have a more dashing frock and coat," she observed, the festival spirit overtaking her.

"Such as?" he asked, idly.

She stopped leisurely before a window. "The sand-colored cape," she explained, pointing. "I crave that."

"I'll make a note of it."

"Thank you."

They were passing a telegraph office. "This is Monday," she reflected, aloud. "If I am going away I really should send a telegram."

He was not interested in the telegram. "Are you going away?"

She nodded—absently.

"Whither?" he pursued.

She met his eye with easy insolence. "Any whither."

She picked up a blank from the desk. "Before you send that," he observed, "let me inform you that I am going to Florida on Wednes-

day. Florida is really a first-rate place right now."

She laughed. "I could not wait until Wednesday."

"Then when?"

"To-morrow, if at all."

"It suits me." She met his gaze. Under half-closed lids—adventurous, daring—she stared at him. She was thinking of his eyes—blue, deep, mysterious—and the curly hair.

"Is that settled?" he asked.

She turned to the desk. "Settled," she replied, and wrote the wire.

CHAPTER V

It was not until he came by the shop whose brightly lighted window appears like a beacon at the corner of Charlemagne Place and Severn Street that Simon felt, intermingled with his low spirits, a vague foreboding.

The front door of the little house did not open automatically for him before he could put his key into the lock. In the living-room was no one freshly attired and smiling to greet him. There was in view only Easter, visible through the kitchen door beating something in a bowl and humming an unrecognizable tune.

The fire struggled with a green log, snarling out smoke. The room with its one light, was dull and dark. He noticed that his rug was faded, his furniture worn. Everything, like his mood, in a low key.

He heard footsteps above that assured him she was in the house. He put down his hat and coat and stood reading, without interest, the paper he had laid upon the table. The Supreme Court had decided that the California lands belonged to the Texas Imperial Valley Railroad. Yes. That was what Fulford and the others had been exulting over. What petty things made people glad.

She ran down the stair, smiling. He found himself suddenly happy. The world expanded. The brightly burning fire, the cheerful room in its soft light, the mellowed furnishings made a background for her.

She wore an evening dress. Her shoulders and arms were white against dark fabric. "See," she said, "this strap keeps slipping down over my arm. I tried to keep it there with adhesive plaster, but it moves and shows the plaster."

He stared at the black patch on her skin. He was aware of a swift undercurrent of excitement in her. She seemed to vibrate with a sort of eager restlessness, as if she were some fluttering animal which, long patient within four walls, felt the unconquerable urge to fly.

"We are going out to dinner," she said, without preamble.

"Dinner?"

"Yes. It's the name of a meal. By some called supper. We *must* be gay."

It did not occur to him to dissent. He sent Easter away, somewhat reluctantly changed into a dinner-coat and fared forth. As she moved lightly down the street her hand lightly touched his arm. She hummed a frivolous dance-tune—resolutely.

No, she did not want to ride. She wanted to walk. She wanted to stop at every shop-window

and select everything she would like to have. Did he think there was anything more exciting than to purchase everything in all the shops and send them home—in a perfectly imaginary limousine.

“See, Simon,” she exclaimed, suddenly, “there it is. That is what I crave.”

Behind a sheet of glass hung a luxurious extravagance of garments bathed in light. He gazed with an effort to counterfeit the delight of a connoisseur at a certain sumptuous wrap.

“My cloak,” she explained.

He bracketed colors under wide headings. “The gray one?” he asked, with insulting inaccuracy.

She whispered, “Sand-colored.”

If he had had at that moment the choice of a thousand things, he would have yielded to the desire to purchase that cloak for her. But one does not buy sand-colored cloaks for the ladies of one’s acquaintance—however beloved.

Presently the motions of shopping stopped. He sensed that they were approaching another phase of their adventure. In the offing rose a sign, writ in lights of an appropriate color, which read “The Purple Gull.” Against the sky a creature, rudely outlined in light, flapped its wings in representation of this ornithological oddity. His guide brought him to a halt directly beneath it.

Before them gloomed a mysterious portal, its

glass doors draped with purple hangings, the loggia before the doors soothed by a grape-colored aura thrown from lights mysteriously unseen.

"Here we are," she exclaimed, cheerfully.

The shrouded doors, as they approached, opened quite mechanically. Within all was dim, solemn. A young woman in half-mourning took his hat and coat, and a smooth-faced undertaker in a shirt of intricate tucks made a sort of bow and asked "How many?"

His suspicion that Doris and Simon were two having been confirmed, the mortician faced about and marched with considerate softness into a wide, long room several steps below the level upon which they had entered. One had a view of purple hangings rich and luxurious, of soft lights diffused and unexplained, of a hollow square of white tables each with its touch of purple flowers around a smooth empty floor, and finally of terrifying people elaborately dressed and staring.

It was a long walk through the gauntlet of eyes. At length Doris poked the undertaker in the arm. "Taking us into the kitchen?"

"This table, madam," he asserted, obsequiously resentful, whipping out chairs in a secluded spot.

"I prefer to be closer."

Simon wondered at her temerity in thus opposing him. An exchange of phrases followed, the intent of which he did not gather. As a re-

sult, however, they were at length seated at a table adjoining the shiny, empty floor.

"If there is anything to see, I want to see it," she explained. He noted that she was unusually keyed-up, excited.

A personage appeared and accusingly placed a printed list before each of them. Simon could feel the eyes of the personage boring into the top of his head. He studied, bewildered, a maze of titles. He was relieved presently to hear her voice and know that he did not have to order the food. It was a difficult matter to look at the outside of a person and deduce therefrom what the inside required.

"They have a cabaret show here," she remarked when this formality was finished, indicating a gaudy little theatre curtain at the end of the room.

"Why is it necessary to have a show while one eats? I should think good food would be sufficient ——"

"Oh no, Simon dear. You can't amuse the *cognoscenti* by appealing to but one of their senses at a time. You have to hit them twice to get their attention. At grand opera now they have trapeze performers over the audience to relieve the tedium."

"I don't believe it," he ventured.

"Not only that. They permit smoking in the

three rear pews of churches. They drape the Grand Canyon in colored bunting to make it pretty. They dance in art galleries, so that one may look at pictures to music, as one glides by. Never one thing at a time."

He laughed at her extravagant mood which, however, did not quite explain itself to him. The personage brought them a complicated viand, low in edibility, high in the matter of entourage. Upon superimposed plates of diminishing sizes, a dash of a food of ambrosial delicacy rested beneath a dome of glass—unbelievably hot.

"It is insulated," she observed, "to keep it warm should you wish to dance a long dance with me."

The orchestra was at that moment dashing into a complicated uproar. The part of this melody that interested Simon was the red light within the bass drum, which made it a full bright circle like a rising moon. After a time a thin man and a woman in a low-backed gown appeared through the curtain and danced together in the open space. During a portion of this number, as they were dancing back to back, the man bent and threw her easily over his head to her feet before him, leaving the powdered imprint of her back on his coat. The imprint entertained him.

Following this appeared a group of ladies rep-

representing abstract matters—such as Truth, Innocence, Piety and Prohibition—suitably portrayed by females attired in the half-way costumes of ladies rescued from a nocturnal fire. Simon was doubtful as to the proper attitude to adopt toward these ladies of allegory. Of course, one couldn't be fully clothed and be allegorical at the same time. Something had to be sacrificed. So he became carefully casual, glancing up from time to time with polite but not prying attention.

These females were incidental anyway—far clouds upon a far horizon. The centre of the picture was near him. She rose to-night upon a high froth of gaiety. She revealed to him an unbelievable resource of mercurial spirits. He wondered at the energy that provided fuel for it, and to his mind came the thought that her mood was a trifle too light, as though its very spontaneity were the result of effort.

The orchestra played dance music. She fairly radiated the rhythm of it. Her eyes sparkled. Her fingers moved to the cadence. She was caged in, suffering in inaction. At last there was a waltz. "Dance with me," she said.

In his youth he had been carefully taught to waltz. He stood upon the floor, dazed, filled with trepidation. She stepped into his embrace and they drifted effortlessly around the floor. He forgot the others dancing, the crowd looking on

critically. He remembered only her—in the arc of his arm.

There were no more waltzes. But the rhythm and memory of that one continued in his mind—a moment crystallized, arrested, blotting out the succeeding ones.

Treading the clouds of exaltation, he had no distinct recollection of the remainder of their stay under that roof. It seemed that they had finished their dinner. There were transactions with a card. The tips of his fingers were wet from the copper bowl before him. He found himself before a goddess in black dress and white cap, debating absently whether it would be polite to pay her for the return of his hat and coat. They were on the street again.

“You’ve been asleep, Simon. The next time I shall have a pin in my slipper to stick you with.”

He laughed. The exhilaration which had been his was not to be confused with so dull and distant a thing as sleep. They walked on. Astonished at his own daring, he stopped determinedly before a gaudy taxicab. But she drew him away, whispering that she wanted to walk.

As they passed each street that marked their progress homeward, an unexplained reluctance to return came over him. A little while more would bring to an end her day with him. It seemed—

not reasonably—a thing to be struggled against. The lighted window at the Charlemagne Place corner came soon. Too soon his key rasped in the lock and the door opened upon a dark house.

At the foot of the stair she held out her hand. This foreboding was upon him. He struggled to say something but the words did not form themselves. It was an uncomfortable moment. He felt her glance and in that moment seemed to see himself with her eyes—silent, ungainly, his face ridiculously expressive of concern. It made him ashamed. He squared his shoulders.

He thought how bright were her eyes. He saw her lower lip tremble. “Good-bye, Simon dear,” she said, not in her voice, but in a whisper—strangely unsteady. She stood pressing her hands together. “We ——” But that was all.

He stared after her retreating figure, losing itself in the shadows above.

CHAPTER VI

It was a gloomy, dingy morning. A foggy imitation of daylight crept in at the windows. A drizzle of indolent rain seeped downwards, promising slush to the gray-black snows without. The sodden atmosphere, which seemed to have leaked with the light into the house laid its leaden weight upon Simon.

What a morning, he thought. Dullness, cheerlessness, depression fallen over everything like a thick, drab, suffocating blanket. He ate his breakfast steeped in a cheerlessness to match the morning. She tinkled her spoon pointedly against her glass. He glanced up startled and met two round, brown eyes levelled upon him, two dimple craters threatening to appear, appearing, vanishing and pleasantly threatening again. With these manifestations came and went a disconcerting smile.

“How about a little joy, Simon? This gloom stuff is very unpretty.”

He returned her gaze, absently arresting his spoon in its flight. A slow, unwilling smile imitated hers; and, watching her, he endeavored to proceed with his meal in an undisturbed manner. A wild fluttering of her hands, however, warned

him that the spoon was still an egg-spoon, and not, by some metamorphosis, a spoon to stir one's coffee. It was so difficult to be poised in her presence.

"At any rate," he asserted, to save his face, "there is no such word as 'unpretty.'"

She opened her eyes wide. "I have just used it," she reminded him.

"It's—hybrid, argot, pigeon-English."

"It's a pure Latin derivative," she observed. "And I know Latin."

Still with that thorough seriousness, she rose and seated herself upon the arm of the sofa, her feet upon the edge of his chair. "I can even speak Latin—fluently," she offered, brazenly.

"I am sure, in whatever language you spoke, you would be fluent."

She considered the points of her shoes adjacent to him. "Were it not unladylike, I should kick you."

"Hurry," he replied, pleased with his remark concerning fluency, "converse."

She leaned forward impudently, her mouth punished into a semblance of insulting seriousness. "Simovus," she submitted as a sample, "dovus youvus lovus mevus."

A piece of absurdity designed either to make him laugh at her or to make her laugh at him—or a little of both. He was quite out of patience

with her, a sensitive chord of resentment sounding in him; and turned sharply toward her—to find her face a few inches from his, bubbling with a contagion against which he had no defense.

“I told you,” she cried, the second he had capitulated, “I could speak it.”

“I could have understood that sentence,” he replied, unexpectedly, “in any language.”

“Oh, Simon. How lovely!” she sighed. “You are such a flirt.”

To which, of course, there was no reply. “But you haven’t answered,” she dared to say, “the question I propounded.”

Simon started to put on his overcoat. “All the world,” he said, “does.”

She stood beside him at the door. “I have kept a rough account,” she said, suddenly, “of what my presence here has cost and I am going to make a payment soon.”

He started. “Don’t. It would spoil everything.”

“Must. It’s the rule.” She put a hand lightly upon each of his arms as they hung at his sides. “Good-bye, Simon.”

“Good-bye. See you to-night.”

She did not reply. Presently he was striding down the street under his dripping umbrella. At the corner he turned. She waved her hand.

CHAPTER VII

THE high office building in which the Appalachian Steel was housed seemed, upon this rainy morning, a more than usually unpleasant symbol for toil. Knots of dreary workers, pushing through the revolving doors, shook their dripping umbrellas and slopped dismally through the dirty sea of water that covered the marble pattern of the floor. The unventilated elevators reeked with the smell of wet clothing.

It was the sort of morning to make one feel that he was about to lose his job—in fact the sort of morning when it needed but a trifling jog of Fate's elbow to make that lady spill disaster broadcast.

The long faces in the Appalachian office indicated that the workers there expected at any moment that jog of the elbow. And they knew that when a large organization such as the one for which they labored started to reduce expenses, the scythe swung with easy abandon.

Wyeth had taken great care to spread this foreboding among them. Secure in the fact that he himself was to be retained, he had found it pleasant to discuss with those who occupied less pro-

tected positions, the diverting matter of the coming cyclone. As a result, Nell Mangan's spirits no longer soared. MacKellar's free-acting tongue was silent. The grumbling Mr. Scrivener, trembling for his tenure, for once found the office and the systems and the regulations thereunto pertaining absolutely perfect and without flaw.

In the course of the morning Wyeth appeared, important with new clothes, new travelling-bag and new brief case. When he had laid aside his raincoat, with a consciousness of perfection, he was a breath-taking picture of newness—rich scarf in stripes of contrasting colors, soft white silken shirt, and fine dark suit, accurately pressed. Even his shoes were new and shining, their rubber heels leaving an echelon of six small circles on the floor where he had walked.

"What time do you leave?" MacKellar asked.

"Noon. Just stopped to see if everything was O. K."

"Mr. Clark and the others have not yet appeared."

"I won't have time to wait for them."

Scrivener, pattering nervously up to him, laid a soiled hand on the lapel of his coat. "Say, Mr. Wyeth," he asked, peering over his glasses, "when is this storm to break? When are we going to be fired?"

Wyeth gently removed the hand. "Don't

touch, Scriv, just look. Why, the storm, my boy, will break soon. There was one little thing, the nature of which I did not discover, that had to take place first. After that the deluge."

Having imparted this news, he took his departure—buoyant and flushed with expectation. Behind him he left gloom. This gloom was not decreased when, immediately after lunch, Mr. Clark and the two investigators entered the office—determination written upon their faces.

"It will be this afternoon," prophesied MacKellar. "We who are about to die salute thee, as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said."

A pretense of work went on, a dull unconscious movement of hands. Papers were filed, letters were read—listlessly—not altogether coherent memoranda written. An unwonted stillness draped the room.

"I wonder who will be the first." Again MacKellar spoke against the silence.

"I shall," guessed Nell. "I am a flapper. And flappers are going out of style."

The hands of the clock now pointed to two. The executioners had been in the office for an hour, and the blow had not fallen. Simon waited with the rest, dully.

At five minutes after two, the buzzer rang for William, the slow-footed office-boy. William, to whom a job was just a necessary annoyance which

if lifted would immediately be succeeded by another, sighed, closed his magazine and got under way toward the star chamber.

Neither pencil nor pen traced a line upon any document in the long office, no head bent over any desk, no eye left the portal through which the deliberate Mercury had disappeared. After an eternity—really about three-quarters of a minute—he reappeared. With care he closed the door behind him. In his exasperatingly shuffling gait he walked down the room, no portent nor sign upon his expressionless face. Presently he stopped.

“Want you in the office, Mr. Haldane.”

And returned to his magazine, his duty done. Conscious of the relieved yet still apprehensive glances that followed him, Simon amid silence stalked forward. His face was fiery red. He was ashamed that, after years of conscientious effort, it was he who was the first to be selected.

As he closed the door of the front office behind him, a buzz of nervous conversation broke out in the room. The primitive comfort that the blow had been for Simon instead of for any of them gave but a narrow margin of hope. That stay would last but for a moment and then another name would be called.

Simon, standing before Mr. Clark and the others, was confronted suddenly with the realization

that he had a deep affection for this place of toil in which he had spent so many years. It had been his life. Whatever he had accomplished since his adolescence had been given to and absorbed by the great Appalachian. When he left he would leave, not a position, but those seven years of his life.

There was the frightful old walnut bookcase, against which Mr. Clark's iron-gray head was now thrown out in relief. When Simon had come into the office as a very junior clerk, that bookcase had been a cemetery. In its ample depths had been interred every variety of printed information—catalogues, reports, bulletins. It had been an attic, into which had been thrust things too precious to be thrown away, yet not valuable enough to be retained.

He had in those early days seen Mr. Trundle, finding upon his desk a monograph containing information so useful that it would have been criminal to throw it in the waste-paper basket, purge his soul from blame by wedging it into the already tight shelves of the case—where a week later no human being could have found it. Simon remembered the days of pleasure he had had in thinning out this morgue and making an index for it.

On the wall above it hung the photograph of the entire office force, dusty and stained with dampness, with old Faulkner seated in the fore-

most row; and on the fringe of it he himself, readily recognizable by a derby hat too large for him. On that day C. P., while shaking hands with them all, had said to him, "You are absent-minded. You should go far,"—a speech he had never understood.

Through the wide triple window he saw the familiar landscape of dingy buildings, at which he had gazed for so many days and years that it seemed to be his. He could not bring himself to believe that henceforth that scenery would be barred from him.

"Mr. Haldane."

He started. They were going to tell him now. Mr. Clark, solemn, severe, with an expression that was meant to imply that he intended to be just, was clearing his throat. Simon hoped he would be swift.

"Mr. Haldane, you have doubtless been told at some time during the recent investigations that this office would be subject to a reorganization. Mr. Trundle, whose ideas were—ah—had not kept pace with the times, has been transferred to work more congenial to him. The remainder of the office force must expect——"

Why didn't he get through? Why make an oration when it required but two words to say it all?

"—must expect the inevitable reorganization.

We expect them to accept cheerfully and without question our decision. Mr. Wyeth, who has had much reason to feel that he would be Mr. Trundle's successor, we have sent on a little pleasure trip. We wish to be kind to him."

Kind! Kind to Wyeth! What did that mean?

"The subject of Mr. Trundle's successor has, of course, been a matter of greatest moment. We cannot afford to make a misstep. We must have a man who knows this business, who has kept step with the times, who has vision. Mr. Deems and I are agreed that that man is not Wyeth. Wyeth, in spite of his ——"

"Not Wyeth?" repeated Simon.

"No."

"No," asserted Deems, bringing a fat fist down upon the table.

Simon stared. Why were they telling him this?

"Then who ——"

Mr. Clark rose and a smile broke into the solemnity and sincerity and justness of his face.

"Mr. Haldane, we have selected you."

CHAPTER VIII

CONSTERNATION first, then relief, wonder, exultation tempered with misgivings and back to consternation again. This was the cycle that Simon went through like a sequence of chill and fever. It is useless to say that he was rational, or clear-headed, or clothed in stately calm, or modest or insufferable, or exhilarated or cast-down, or garrulous or glum, or nervous or apathetic. It would have been interesting if the poise had been his to be predominantly any one of these.

It would have been interesting—and at the same time he was thinking so—if he could have gracefully stepped forward and placing the fingers of his right hand firmly upon the mahogany table in the gesture that has always indicated force, reserve and ease, with a few crisp words have acknowledged the honor they had conferred upon him. In words that would have revealed a fine balance of modesty and self-reliance.

The effort he did make was blundering, in the manner of one rising from the delirium of a high fever to speak. He had no recollection of what

he said. He remembered looking squarely into Mr. Clark's steel-blue eyes, thinking, instead of about the words he was saying, of the responsibility that had devolved upon him, of the responsibility to live up to the high trust they had placed upon him. Anyone would naturally think of that. But it was almost impersonal with Simon. As if he were sitting apart wondering how that fellow Haldane could ever manage it.

Of course the first big instinct that blazed up in him was to decline. He could not think of the position of successor to Trundle as a title, a post of honor, a feather to be worn in one's hat. To him it was a terrific thing, tagged with the inexorable condition that having accepted it one could not fail.

But when the instinct to decline had developed in him, he found that he could by no means bring himself to do it. In itself it seemed like failure. While the thought of the new responsibility chilled him, stopped the circulation of his blood, a certain surprising vein of sturdiness made him stubbornly aware that he was not going to refuse.

Fortunately his speech of acceptance never went upon record. Nor were there moving pictures of his poses while shaking hands with Mr. Clark and Mr. Deems and the owl-eyed investigator—who, Simon was certain, was in a fever to ask: "Why do you wear a faded green necktie

when accepting promotion? Why is one leg of your trousers upheld at a higher level than the other? Why do your ears blush when the rest of your countenance blushes?" and so on.

Nor were there moving pictures and stenographic reports of his words and postures during the ensuing reception that was tendered him by the office force, through which he hardly knew whether acute discomfort or feverish contentment was his principal emotion.

"Say, this is Jake, Simon—Mr. Haldane," ejaculated Nell. "I'll tell the world."

"Congratulations, Si—Mr. Haldane," said Fulford.

"I'd rather," observed the new chief, "you'd call me Simon and help me in my job than Mr. Haldane and not. I don't need—respect. I need"—he hesitated and plunged ahead—"punch." And flushed comfortably at the success of his vocabulary.

"Mr. Haldane—Simon," spoke old Mr. Scrivener, "will it be your august pleasure to sack your obedient servant?"

Simon was confused. Here was his first decision to make. He paused—one can always act properly if he takes a moment for reflection. If he made good in his new position, the amount of business that must pass through the office would require the services of all of them. "If it is to be

left to me," he ventured, "no one will be discharged."

He turned to Mr. Clark. Clark nodded. "It is." Simon was then made aware that his first official act had received full and unanimous approbation. In a lull in the proceedings later Deems shook hands with him. "It was your perfect home life, Haldane, that convinced me."

In the waning light of the evening Simon walked homeward over the messy mixture of rain and snow. The intoxication of the day left him in no mental state to observe that it was messy and that the fine rain which fell was chill and uncomfortable.

He was astonished at the new feeling of confidence that had come to him. Nature, he thought, responding to the emergency. When he dropped the change resulting from the purchase of a newspaper into a vest pocket which immediately let it run out again upon the sidewalk and a friendly hand helped him retrieve it, he found himself explaining to the man the fact that he had two suits, one with holes in the vest pockets and another with holes in all pockets except the vest, and that it was difficult to remember which suit he was wearing—with almost a glibness. He was nearly at ease.

As he walked the dismal rain had no power to damp his good humor. A powerful excitation

lifted him above the discomforts of the weather. He scarcely noted the puddled streets, the searching downpour, the chill wind which in the morning had so depressed him.

He hurried on, filled with anticipation. He knew that in the little house on Charlemagne Place she was waiting. And that when he got there he was going to be insufferably set up. But it would be pleasant on this one occasion to develop to its utmost the defect of being insufferably set up.

He had attempted to telephone to Doris to tell her that he was bringing home startling news—by way of making her uncomfortably curious as to its import. But though he had waited a long while there had been no answer.

This had disappointed him. It would have been pleasant to have had her in an expectant mood. But his news was of such a startling nature that, presented in any form, it could not fail to be dramatic.

The best way to inform her, he was thinking, was to be nonchalant. He would slip his overcoat partly off and remark, as though suddenly remembering something of small importance, "A new head of the office was appointed to-day." He must not look at her as he spoke or she would perceive instantly that he was not at all casual. He would have to be struggling with his coat.

And she would say "Who?"—all unsuspecting the nature of his reply.

At that moment he would turn upon her and shout "Simon Haldane!"

Further than that his imagination would not carry him. The scene was too big for his powers of dramatization. He could see her eyes widen, her breath drawn quickly in, her hands fluttering together. That was as far as he could see—the joyous part of her was that no one could predict the quality of her effervescent spirits.

At last Charlemagne Place, sheltered from the driving rain. The steps of his house under the hood that protected them were comfortably dry. He trembled with excitement as he searched with eager hands for the key. In the dim light he saw on the steps footprints showing a curious echelon arrangement of small circles imprinted upon the stone by a new pair of rubber heels.

He closed the door behind him. There stood Easter, quite evidently waiting for him.

"Where's Miss Doris?"

"She's not here, sir."

PART FIVE
GLASS-TOPPED DESKS

CHAPTER I

Not there! He found himself asking Easter again. It was strange—why, she was always there when he returned.

A cold uneasiness gripped him. In sudden desperation he ran up the stair, his dripping umbrella still in his hand. To his knock there was no answer. He pushed open the door. Within unaccustomed orderliness. The trinkets on the bureau, the vague profusion of her small possessions spread out, the book marked with a ball of a handkerchief, the magazine open on the bed—where were they?

A white envelope on the bedside table was propped against the wall, held in place by a red book—an unused diary of his. With fumbling fingers he tore the pasted flap from its place.

For a long while he stood there holding the pencilled note in his hand, staring at the words, the water running in a steady stream from his umbrella to a pool on the floor. . . .

He shivered in his damp clothing. . . .

After a while, with an effort, he roused himself. He was cold. Entering the smaller bedroom, mechanically he procured other apparel. Ab-

stractedly he sat on a chair by the bed, holding dry shoes and stockings in his hands, uncertain of his purpose in getting them. Easter called from below. He roused himself again and proceeded with his changing—slowly, dazedly, with much lost motion.

Easter called. "Presently," he muttered. There was the note on the bed beside him. He held it before him again, staring at it, trying to arrange his thoughts to fit in with it. He could not understand. Many things she did were incomprehensible to him. But this was so important. He *must* understand. He knew the words of the message—he did not need it before him to read.

"Simon dear, when you see this I shall be far away. At noon to-day I leave your house. You will blame me because I did not tell you yesterday. And I am ashamed. But there is someone else—whom you know—— What I have done they will brand me for. But it is too late to retrace that step. I must accept whatever punishment comes. Heaven knows I've been chastized severely enough in the last few weeks—in spite of your goodness to me. Anything almost is relief from that.

"Some day I can tell you. Good-bye. God bless you."

Just that!

She was gone. He did not even know where she

had gone. It hurt him that she had not told him. It hurt him to think that she would not even let him come to the station to bid her good-bye. There had been no one to say farewell to her, unless ——

It was curious that he had not thought of it before. Wyeth would have been at the station at noon, and unless there was a very great crowd he must certainly have seen her.

A pang of regret struck him. Wyeth was the person who seemed to have come nearer to her than he had been able to himself. His knowledge of the world, his ease, his tact enabled him to obtain from Doris a response greater than had Simon Haldane. When Wyeth was with her Simon felt like a lower order of person. Their quick interchange of ideas, their ability to find meaning and diversion in tiny inflections of each other's speech, made them speak to each other a language that Simon could only partially understand.

He saw now that he had always viewed Wyeth with a consuming jealousy.

With pain he realized that it was Wyeth and not he who had bid her the last farewell. Perhaps, even, he had gone on the same train. Possibly that had been prearranged. Wyeth had been too much interested in Doris to go away without telling her. If he had told her and they

had agreed to go on the same train, they would be travelling now on the same car. Perhaps to the same destination.

He stopped suddenly in his fevered promenade of the room. The rain dashed viciously against the window sash. He turned from it shivering as if its cold impact had actually been upon him.

Why had he formed that ghastly thought in his mind? It was impossible, he told himself eagerly. Suppose she and Wyeth *had* been congenial and companionable. Suppose Wyeth were charming and wise and persuasive ——

That was the dangerous thing! Wyeth was unscrupulous and smooth and easy of tongue. She was young, adrift, with no friends. Some chain of circumstance had made her desperate, unheeding, at the mercy of such a man.

Why had he, Simon, let her go? Why had he not known, so that he could have begged her to stay and stay? Even the anomalous position in his house was better than travelling about and being seen travelling about ——

Again Easter's voice. He found himself descending the stair. Opening the front door he stared fixedly at the footprints on the stone steps. They were like the echelon of six small circles made on the office floor by Wyeth's shoes.

He closed the door against the cold.

CHAPTER II

"MR. HALDANE, you wastin' you tea in you saucer."

Simon stared at the cup in his hand, realizing presently that he was not looking at it at all. "Yes," someone was saying—possibly he himself, "I shiver. Got cold—in the rain."

With an efficient poke Easter produced spurting flame in the fireplace. "Yes. Too much storm, Mr. Haldane. Somebody overprayed for rain."

He stared moodily at the table before him. He seemed to hear the colored woman laughing. Why should she laugh? And her voice saying something, to which he was not listening.

"I'se a powaful believer in prayer and supplication," Easter was explaining, painstakingly. "Last week I done pray for fifty cents. I say, 'Lawd, deliver that change into thy servant's hands.' And I walk on clothed in faith. Yessa and bimeby I see an automobile a-standing by the curb and on the seat of it is setting a fo'-bit piece. I doan' stop to 'count for how the Lawd put it there but I jes' drap it in my pocket and pass on saying, 'Praise the Lawd! Praise the Lawd!'"

The drone of her voice was far away. The

things near him—the heat of the fire, the taste of palatable food, the shelter of the house as emphasized by the drive of rain against his window, brought no consciousness of comfort to him. His brain was dulled against these matters. The things on the table he stared at earnestly, not seeing them. In his head a riot of speculation—yet he was not thinking.

After a time he shook his head absently in reply to some half-comprehended question from Easter; and, under her hand, the dishes and food disappeared. When the cloth had been removed and the table folded against the wall, he still sat unmoving.

He knew that Easter questioned him at intervals, rousing him uncomfortably from his abstraction. She seemed to be inquiring as to his health. He was not quite sure whether he made coherent reply to her. He was aware, dully, of certain noises—the ticking of the clock, the cracking of the burning wood, the sound finally of the kitchen door closing. Dead silence in the house explained to him that Easter had gone.

The clock above him struck, echoing upon the room. The quiet within the walls, the empty space, the feeling of a place despoiled, as if something beautiful, irreplaceable had been destroyed, drove him to an unexpected fury.

He found himself on his feet, pacing the floor,

colliding unseeingly with furniture, scarcely conscious of his muscular actions in the delirium of sudden passion.

Rebellious passion! strange to him, controlling him like strong drink. His thoughts did not arrange themselves. Had someone been there to listen, no torrent of words would have flowed from his tongue. His pinnacle of bitterness, of injury was at too great an altitude for his steady mind to even understand. Had he understood that he was now in high blasphemous rebellion against Fate, he would have been ashamed, humiliated.

He was arrested in his wanderings by stumbling over a pile of books he had previously jarred from the table to the floor. The minor irritation of these inanimate things, which also seemed to be combining against him, rubbed him upon the raw. He kicked the volumes viciously from his path. And was immediately sorry. Those were his friends.

He seated himself again in the chair, striving for calmness, for understanding. It was an effort. His mind, accustomed to orderly arrangements of ideas, found no point of beginning. "If she chose," he said aloud, "to go—in that way—nothing I can do now ——" He closed his fists, his whole body taut, as if by muscular energy he might hope to change what had already happened and could now never be called back.

His hands presently relaxed. "Nothing I can do now ——" He rose as if throwing something from him and walked to the corner of the room. He stooped with tender gentleness to pick up the books, blaming himself. The torn binding accused him. What, he thought, had wrath to do with an occasion of this sort?

A primitive urge to flagellation caused him, in a moment, to pull on his overcoat and his rubber shoes. In the rain and the cold wind without his monumental mood contracted to a point where he could begin to understand it. The workings of his mind became intelligible to him.

Wrath had certainly nothing to do with the problem that faced him. To hurl curses at Fate for giving him misfortune was weak, childish. The matter was the result of the great shuffling of the cards. He was supposed to play his hand—not to criticize it.

The right way to view the crises of one's life was frequently as painfully simple as that. A moment's thought and there was the true course laid out for one. A year of misery trying to follow it.

He walked through the rain to places of no general interest. There was a brick house in whose small patch of lawn grew the pines and the blue spruce she had liked. Here the park where trees dressed in snow had courtesied to the

ground for her. Here the shop-windows. Here the one before which she had stopped a long while ago—last night, possibly—to point to a cloak and say, “Simon, that is what I crave.” The cloak was no longer there but in its place some tawdry heliotrope.

His effort to remember the charm and loveliness of her, the glamour quite unforgettable of those days, brought him thus to the same inevitable realization of void. The cloak was gone—she was gone. In their place, nothing.

Returning to the house, he found again her note. He stood reading it. Reading it! when the words were written as clear upon his mind as upon that paper. The sentences took on no new significance. She was going. She could not tell him why. Later perhaps. Good-bye and God bless him.

Thus it was. A blessing!

It was ironic. But he was absurd enough to believe she had meant it. During his cogitations he thought with vindictiveness of Wyeth alone. There was the anomaly that she remained in Simon’s eyes as she had been. He was not equal to the ordeal of passing judgment upon her. He could not ruthlessly shatter the memory of beautiful days.

The manner of her departure was a thing he wished to forget, without the acute suffering of

trying to understand. The note was in his hand. If he kept it he would read it and reread it and reread it. He would be thinking, imagining, constructing her life as it was now—until the glamour of the time she had spent with him would be smudged out of his mind. In the end he would condemn her.

As if it were symbolic of his pathetic desire to retain unblemished the memory of the one touch of romance in his life, he laid the note upon the fire and sturdily thrust it into the flame with the poker. It was presently a gray-white film of ash, then nothing.

He drew a breath. The matter, he told himself, was behind him.

CHAPTER III

ONE of Dr. Saul's means of relaxation was to turn up at the Tuesday afternoon symphonies to watch the people enjoying the music.

Had it been customary for folk whose acquaintance he prized to assemble bi-weekly to listen to the rivetting machines at the shipyard, he would as blithely have purchased his season ticket and as complacently have listened, content in thus comporting himself in the manner of the best and most worldly people.

On the eventful afternoon of Simon's promotion, the doctor was seated happily amidst a brilliant company, with the noise of many instruments beating against his ears. A former President of the United States is reputed to have said that the only tune he recognized without prompting was a composition called Garry Owen. Dr. Saul differed from the former President in that he could not recognize Garry Owen.

He diverted himself during the long numbers by vaguely likening the full chorus of instruments to the troop of motors on a crowded street. A wave of a white-gloved hand and the traffic roared ahead—'cellos, 'viols, oboes, drums and brass, throttles wide open, sirens ashriek. The

white palm raised! the furious procession stopped as suddenly. Almost like silence the still purring of the motors, the whispered melody of the violins; while all the sonorous horse-power of the full symphony held itself in check waiting the signal to go.

When the noise had finally stopped and, watching the others, he had ceased to applaud, he rushed frantically to drop a kind word into the ear of the nearest acquaintance. This office performed, he darted to the next and the next, dropping kind words of an appropriate nature. His stature, enabling him to operate in a plane not so much in demand as the strata shoulder-high, permitted him to filter with surprising celerity through the crowd and drop an astonishingly high number of kind words. He prided himself that he could speak to so many individuals, and upon the felicity of his remarks in each instance.

He was mining his diligent way in the direction of a certain person of importance when he quite unexpectedly came upon Miss Agnes and Miss Albina Caraway, persons whom he held in high regard. There was a certain subject stored somewhere in the back of his mind in which they would be interested. Ah, yes. He glowed with pleasure at his satisfactory memory. Young Haldane!

"I had the pleasure not long ago," he remarked

affably, "of treating the charming Mrs. Haldane."

"The charming whom?" said Albina flatly.

"Mrs. Haldane. Mrs. Simon Haldane."

Agnes and Albina registered blankness. "Mrs. Simon Haldane," repeated the latter, shooting the sun for latitude and longitude. "I have a nephew Simon Haldane, but that has nothing ——"

Saul smiled pleasantly. "The same. On Charlemagne Place."

A sense of giddiness came over Albina. Her notably active tongue lay useless in the bottom of her mouth. Agnes looked helplessly at her, wondering why she did not correct this error.

"Why," she explained, kindly, on her own initiative, "Simon isn't ——"

A nudge in time from sister Albina. "You say you visited her?" she chirped, abnormally bright. "On Charlemagne Place?"

"Quite so. Nice girl. Beautiful concert, wasn't it?" This was his terminal phrase, indicating that he had sighted someone else. He was gone, burrowing himself out of sight beneath the throng.

"I didn't know," began Agnes.

"Nobody did. But we mustn't let outsiders think that such a thing has happened in the family without our knowledge."

"But poor Simon couldn't be ——"

"It seems incredible. Agnes, we must go there—immediately."

"But—at the dinner-hour?"

This gave Albina pause. Even under stress of great emotion one must be conventional. "We could," she suggested, in the manner of one proposing the adoption of Mohammedanism, "have our dinners down-town, and go later."

Agnes hardly knew what to say to this daring proposal. They never had dined down-town after a symphony concert. "Would it be too great a jaunt," she suggested, timidly, "to dine at home and make a second trip?"

"Oh, Agnes, it would be so fatiguing. We never do go out in the evenings."

That was true. And there was a subtle distinction between staying out and going out. "Of course," said Agnes, in process of allowing herself to be persuaded, "there is the roast. Roasts are never so good the second day."

Albina stiffened nobly. "In an emergency of this sort, my dear Agnes, we must forget roasts."

"Very well then. If we can find a place where they serve whole-wheat bread——"

It so happened, therefore, that while the ashes of Simon's letter were whitening and withering in the blaze, a taxi containing Agnes and Albina, crushers of precedent, drew up before his door.

It was with a towering hope that he threw it

open wide. The depths of bitter disappointment were his.

"Do shut the door, Simon," said Albina, at length. "We will lay off our coats, Agnes, so that we may feel the benefit of them when we go out."

Simon assisted clumsily in these operations and laid the garments in unsuitable locations, from which they had to be transferred. In a panic he adjusted furniture for them, knowing that it would be unsatisfactory. This proved to be true, for Agnes could not sit in a chair with arms and Albina never sat close to the fire. These preliminaries arranged satisfactorily, he said:

"There has been quite a fall of rain."

"Simon," observed Albina, "we have heard you are married."

He rubbed the heel of his thumb against his other hand. "No. I am not."

Both ladies assumed an expression of severity. "Dr. Saul informed us that he had made a professional visit to your wife. In this house."

"She was not my wife."

The blood rose in unison to the faces of the visitors as the import of this terrible speech penetrated to their consciousness. It was doubtful if it were even fitting to discuss this. In the emergency Agnes, overcome with confusion, looked to Albina. Albina sat stiffly upon the forward part of her chair.

"Do I understand, Simon, that there was a young woman living here with you, who was not your wife?"

"Yes. She was here about two weeks."

"And you introduced her to Dr. Saul as your wife?"

"No. That was his mistake."

He gazed dully at the curiously crimson faces of his aunts. He did not remember their faces as being so red. The aunts folded and unfolded their hands in their laps, torn between a stern sense of duty and an excruciating consciousness of the indelicacy of the situation. How would it be possible for Albina to express her disapproval of Simon's conduct without immodestly betraying herself as being aware of a situation one could not discuss?

"What was this young woman's name?" she asked, severely, by way of feeling along gradually into a proper form of reprimand.

"Doris."

The aunts grew majestic. "We are not interested in her first name."

"That is all I know."

"Do you mean to say, Simon Haldane, you don't even know her name?"

He indicated that this was indeed true.

Albina ascended to the very highest point from which she could look down upon him. "Do you

know *anything* concerning her?" she asked, crushingly.

"Very little. She came here one night ——" Standing there he looked past them, seeing not the empty couch behind them, but the well-remembered figure as he had seen her that first morning—the red-brown hair cascading over her shoulders, the white skin against her black dress, the tender, gripping, appealing smile, the smile that never again now would ——

"And stayed."

"Yes. . . . She was ill. . . ."

That, of course, had nothing to do with it. It was not fitting to discuss excuses. Albina now assumed a broad, general, condemning attitude.

"You inherit this tendency, Simon, from the Haldanes. We should have kept in closer touch with you. I blame myself. You have fallen into bad company. You always had a tendency to be wild, to live by yourself, to avoid consulting your relatives. And now you have brought disgrace upon us all."

"I am not wild," said Simon. "I have brought no disgrace upon myself—or you."

"Is it no disgrace to live alone in this house with"—the blood mounted furiously to Agnes's cheek in apprehension of what Albina must say and almost simultaneously to Albina's

when these frightful words rose to her tongue—"a—a common woman."

There was an absolute hush. Agnes and Albina were overcome at the actual uttering of the phraseology, and sat silently suffering. Simon, who up to this point had viewed the proceedings dully, as if it were a catechism of someone else, brought down the flat of his hand upon the table. His face was dully red.

"Aunt Albina," he shouted, "I—you must not use those words again. I cannot listen to such a thing unmoved."

Both ladies felt Albina's guilt. "It was unladylike," she stammered, confused, flustered.

"I don't care about that. But if it is unladylike to use those words, is it refined to apply them to a person of whom you know nothing?"

That was the humiliating thing. They had exposed themselves to criticism as to their gentility. Simon had rebuked them. Albina's indignation rose.

Simon leaned wearily against the mantel-shelf. They were his aunts, but he wished they would go. Too much had happened for him to be able to continue indefinitely to endure their dissecting of his motives and weaknesses. They must be driven to some other topic. His overwrought nerves could stand no longer this cold reviewing of the present one.

He must carry the attack into their territory. Spent as he was from the emotions of the day, he saw that he must tell them now what he had to tell. While they were consumed with indignation, righteous anger, scorn and all those uplifting emotions, he would let it fall gently upon them like a cooling shower.

"I have," he said, "been appointed head of the Appalachian office here."

He had not overestimated the chilling effect of it. They stared at him speechless. Their concern on account of his matrimonial venture dimmed. A strange new matter grew at their horizon.

"*Head of the office!*" In the tone Albina would have used had he said Grand Lama of Thibet.

"Yes."

"But you have not the qualifications for that position."

"No?"

"You are either very wicked or very stupid. Either would make you unfit."

"How *could* they have selected you, Simon?" asked Agnes, blandly.

"I can't conceive." It was Albina who answered. "Simon has always blundered along. He has never had sufficient mentality to button his clothes upon the proper buttons. He can

scarcely walk down-town without making himself ridiculous."

He listened absently. His kinswomen had affronted him, but not by such a speech. Everyone felt privileged to discuss his shortcomings before him. Perhaps that was to make him think. It was true that he blundered along. He knew that he failed to attend to things close at hand—things which others were accustomed to spend much effort upon. But was he not looking far afield?

As he followed this thought, the aunts moved dimly off to a dim mid-distance. Their voices became as the babbling of brooks, their physical presence as stones upon a hillside, visible but not conspicuous. If, he reasoned, he were utterly, hopelessly inefficient; if the fact that he sometimes forgot to tie his shoelaces were a proof that he was not fully endowed with intellect: then the obligation was upon him not to undertake the new responsibility at the Appalachian.

But he did not yield to it that he was inefficient. He had a yearning to look. It was not a yearning to look at his shoelaces or the buttons on his vest, or to determine if both his stockings were of the same color. It was a yearning to look in one direction and to see far, to pick up all the little dribblets of energy that this man would have expended upon his new shoes or that upon his poker

game or the third upon the endless effort to be a graceful person of the world; and project all these energies upon the one thing he wished to accomplish. Using all that energy and all that power of concentration and all that will to understand would give him the power to see far and to think straight.

He would not be the fussy custodian of details. The world made ten thousands of men to count grains of dust. It made but few to understand the mountain.

He felt that there was a great standardization process in the world that tended, by criticism, by ridicule, by pressure, to reshape him to be like other people. He would be yielding point by point to that. But he wished always to keep the power, if indeed he had it, to think straight and to see far.

If his aunts—if anyone—measured him by a tiny rule too small to gauge the cleanness of his heart, if they viewed him through a glass too minute to see that he was looking beyond their field of vision; their methods of measuring him would, of course, show him wicked, foolishly inefficient. But he need not measure himself by those standards. He knew the state of his heart, the state of his own mind.

An automobile horn sounded in the street before the door. The aunts unostentatiously moved

forward from the dim distance. The babbling brooks became words, sentences. "Our cab!" exclaimed Agnes. "Three minutes late."

"Simon," said Albina, "go to the office in the morning and resign."

He laughed. A new feeling of strength, of competency was in him. Albina hesitated—then held out her hand. She saw that her duty was to be compassionate, to hold the lamp of forgiveness. "Oh, Simon, I'm so very sorry. I'll pray for you."

"So sorry," said Agnes.

They went out in procession, mournful, serious. The door closed.

"Oh, hell!" said Simon—the first time in his life.

CHAPTER IV

THE slow-footed William moved toward the office of Simon Haldane, chief of the local branch of the Appalachian Steel Products Company. He entered the office and stood apathetically.

"William," said Haldane, "ask Miss Mangan to come here."

The boy absorbed the request, relapsed again into torpor and by some subconscious motive power propelled himself to the proper spot, delivered the proper message and returned to base. Nell presented herself before Simon.

"Sit down," he said, indicating a chair upon the opposite side of his desk. She did as requested. "Hereafter that is your headquarters."

She nodded, staring at him intently.

"I have a job," he continued, leaning back and talking as if he were repeating words he had said over and over in his mind, "that I am not fitted for. I have no sense of routine. The map of my head is not neatly ruled off. In it there is no fixed way of proceeding from one place to another."

Nell sat very still, endeavoring to understand.

"Many minds are so designed that when their owners or custodians sign a letter, the pen is each

time automatically returned to the same place. My cerebral mechanism returns the pen each time to a different place. In the space of three hours I could have this desk all littered with pens, none of which I could find. Another thing. When I write something on a piece of paper so as not to forget it, I forget where I have put the piece of paper. Pencils, erasers scatter by some centripetal force. That's the reason I say I am not fitted for this job."

"I should think some memory system ——" she began.

"Exactly. Such as you. I want you to devise a filing scheme for pens, pencils, erasers and bits of paper bearing priceless information. We are going to abolish absent-mindedness in this office."

He stared at her, sensing that she might be thinking that if he could not take care of such small matters, he could not take care of the greater responsibilities that were his. "No one can hope to succeed in this position who has not stopped to take stock of himself," he said, gravely. "I have been searching my soul to find and label my shortcomings. Naturally I have not found them all. But it is plain to me that if I attempt to revise myself so that I will be able to administer sickening details such as I have just pointed out to you, I will worry myself to death. In fact

I don't believe I could so revise myself. But these details must be cared for, and the next best thing to caring for them myself is to pick someone who can."

Nell rose in her militant spirit. "I'll tell the Einstein universe you picked a winner," she murmured, modestly.

Simon felt relieved. Here was the first troublesome matter assigned to someone else. He must follow, from now on, the first principle of business—that to be successful one must be supremely lazy. He must not turn over his hand or rise from his desk or move his chair through an arc of ninety degrees, if his purpose could be accomplished by pressing the proper electric button. His desk must be an Olympus, from which issued appropriate dicta. When he should reach that state of perfection in which he could loll at ease before an empty desk, he would be spoken of as a good executive.

It made little difference whether he himself could perform the labors he would impose upon others. The idyllic part of his new position was that work would not be expected of him.

A gentleman presented himself at the door of the office. One of the principles that Simon believed in was that there should be no series of inner rooms to thwart the visitor. If he was disengaged he would see anyone. If the visitor's

business was not of interest to him he could turn it over to someone else. He stared puzzled at the man before him. One of the difficulties of the open door policy was that physiognomies did not suggest names.

"Mr. Concannon," murmured Nell, exhibiting the first fruits of organization.

"Sit down, Mr. Concannon," directed Simon, glibly, proud of his vicarious feat of memory. Mr. Concannon, he now recalled, was the agent of the building, to whom one paid rents and complained concerning unwashed windows. He had brown eyes, of the steady beauty of those possessed by Jersey cattle. Like the cattle's, they were no guarantee of disposition.

"Mr. Haldane," said Concannon, in a full voice, "I congratulate you upon your promotion." He did not mean that, Simon thought. It was imitative—just as were the visitor's pearl spats, which he had seen others wear.

"Thank you," Simon replied, uncertainly.

"The lease for the offices which you now occupy runs out on Saturday. I am presuming that you will want to continue to occupy them for another year. You have assumed a position of grave responsibility and will, of course, wish to give yourself every opportunity to succeed."

This weighty truth led the visitor on to further remarks. Simon made equilateral triangles on

his blotter with his pencil. Here was one of those individuals who was always blocking out other fellows' lives for them, deciding what were their ardent ambitions, the matters they viewed with apprehension, the things they loved, the things they loathed. What right had this Concannon to talk upon the subject of what he, Simon Haldane, wanted? He might as well make an oration on the size of Simon's collar. It wouldn't make the collar any larger.

"Doubtless," he said, taking advantage of a semicolon in the other's remarks, "you are leading up to some matter of interest to us both."

The other frowned. He disliked to have his flow of language restricted, especially by this mild person, whose existence, until a day or two ago, he had not felt inclined to notice.

"Why," he said, "the matter of interest to us both is that we have decided to raise your rent for these offices a thousand dollars for the next year. The increased cost of coal and service ——"

"You raised the rent last year."

"Quite so. And we must raise it again. In consideration of your long occupancy of these offices we have been as lenient as possible with you ——"

"Has the rent of other tenants in the building been raised?" Simon interrupted, hastily. This orator must not be allowed to get clear. Consti-

tutional guarantees of freedom of speech must be abridged in his case.

"The cases of the other tenants will be dealt with as their leases run out."

Simon noted the wavering brown eyes, that looked at you with a glance of sincerity, and away and back again. No, they were not brown like the peaceful orbs of the Jersey. They were coffee-brown like the bars of last summer's chocolate at the news-stand down-stairs. "I think you are taking advantage of a new management to make this increase."

The visitor noted the challenge and laid his sword confidently against the blade of the other. "Say not so," he remarked, pleasantly. "This location is easily worth a thousand dollars more a year to you. It will bring you that value in increased business many times over."

There he sat, explaining with offhand insolence the fundamentals of Simon's business, secure in the fact that he possessed something Simon was compelled to purchase from him. That was Con-cannon's idea of service to the world: to manœuvre others into disadvantageous positions and permit them to buy themselves out.

"Get the New York office on the telephone," Simon directed. The visitor sat back complacently. The first skirmish was his—the new manager was calling for reinforcements.

"Mr. Clark," he heard Simon say, "am I in full charge here?"

The black cylinder at his ear conversed unintelligibly.

"The reason I ask is that they are proposing to raise the rent."

The cylinder rumbled on.

"Then I am to decide." Presently with a slow motion he was hanging the receiver on the hook. Concannon fumbled in his breast pocket. He spread the form of lease before Simon. "Better read it before you sign it," he said, kindly. "I don't like mistakes to happen."

The new manager saw himself in the gladiatorial ring, pitted against this experienced combatant. But the problem was really not complicated. If these offices were essential the thousand dollars was not too much to pay for them. If they were not essential they were expensive at any price. Nothing could alter those two facts. And as for asserting that the offices were essential . . .

He gazed at his visitor, started to speak and then appeared to change his mind. The visitor noted this vacillation with contentment. Simon turned to Nell.

"Call up that moving-van company."

Mr. Concannon's face underwent an abrupt change. Waving a moving-van before him was

like confronting Satan with the flaming cross. It struck at the very font of his vitality.

"What are you going to do?" he demanded.

"Move."

"Where?"

This was, of course, not relevant. "There are a number of places."

Concannon seized the unsigned lease. It was never too late to change front. "This," he exclaimed, striking it a chastizing blow, "is something I have been opposed to from the first. I spent all day yesterday trying to convince the owners that they were making a mistake. I believe when I tell them of your attitude, they can be prevailed upon to make a change. You give me until to-morrow morning," he said, patting Simon on the shoulder with the now friendless lease, "and I believe I can arrange it all to your satisfaction."

"Did you get that moving-van company, Miss Mangan?"

"How about it, Mr. Haldane?"

"How about what?"

"How about the lease at the same price?"

Nell swung the telephone arm toward him. "There they are." Simon held his hand over the instrument. An idea occurred to him. This man Concannon was always telling others what they wanted. Why not explain Concannon's

business to him? "Why, Mr. Concannon," he began, "I shouldn't approve of that for you. Your expense for coal and service has increased so greatly in the past year that you could not afford to lease these offices to us at the former price. And then, since you made us an especially low price on account of our being tenants of long standing, you can obtain an even greater rental from new tenants; because this location will repay its rent many and many times in increased business for the company which occupies ——"

But Mr. Concannon was gone.

CHAPTER V

Entry in diary of Simon Haldane:

April 14th. I believe I am by nature the sort of person who writes in a diary. For that very reason, doubtless, I have never kept one. I don't like to think I am so anæmic and clock-like that every evening on the stroke of ten I will seize a morocco book and write Temperature so much, Barometer so much, Flurry of snow, Baked apple for breakfast, Bought new overshoes.

But under stress of unwonted depression I am reverting to type. After resisting temptation for some days, ten o'clock finds me sitting down to tell myself what I have been doing. I will not defend myself for this vice except to say it is companionable.

I have taken this book from the room up-stairs. It is the one she used for the purpose of propping conspicuously against the wall her note to me. That room is just as it was. I do not at all approve of myself for keeping it so. It is a comfortable and useful room, and letting it remain just as she left it complicates all my living in this house. But somehow, when the question of using it again arises in my mind, I find that I cannot.

April 15th. I began to-day my round of visits to the customers of the Appalachian in this city.

Missionary work they call it. I suppose one of the common urges in life is to don one's best clothes when embarking on a mission of importance. In the dusk of early morn, I dressed carefully. I polished my shoes, I wore the cerulean knitted scarf that blends so well with my blue suit, I adorned myself with the amethyst cuff-bars and the thin gold watch chain Aunt Albina gave me. I fear, however, I did not put the proper thought to it. I was considering all the time what I was going to say, what information I must obtain, what big purpose should be accomplished by my crusade. Naturally I made a terrible mistake. In the afternoon, when all the damage had been done, Nell Mangan drew my attention to the fact that I was wearing my black evening trousers, with rows of braid at the seams.

A complication of minor importance, it might be said. But how many of the score of men I visited were thinking, "What sort of masquerade is this fellow carrying on?" I explained to Nell that in the future it would be part of her reason for existence to see that I did not go forth unless properly caparisoned.

April 16th. The missionary work goes on. For the purpose I was faultlessly attired this morning. Nell suggested one of those gold collar pins which hold together two pieces of fabric already secured in several ways. At her prompt-

ing I purchased a hat which has a subtly pleasant feel like the skin of a mole. She said I looked "spiffy"—which is an adjective of approval.

When I visit these men I am supposed to be merely pleasant. It is a sort of New Year's call. I am supposed to find out whether they are satisfied with us and, if not, the reason for their dissatisfaction; or, if they have never used our product, the reason for that. I am also supposed to impress my pleasant personality upon them.

Some of these crisp business fellows must be taken aback by me. I blush under stress of the encounters. In endeavoring to make a graceful exit in one case, not realizing that there were two doors to the room, I made the embarrassing error of entering the gentleman's private lavatory.

But I try to be honest. If one of them says that our sash is not beautiful, I do not insult his intelligence by contradicting his statement. If he says it is more expensive than wooden sash or some other steel sash, I give him figures to show him that under certain circumstances our product is cheaper. I have also been guilty of saying under what circumstances a competitor's product is cheaper. This would turn Mr. Clark's hair white. But my object is to give service. We cannot build up a solid clientele by selling our product under conditions which make it certain that, sooner or later, the customers will discover

that something else would have been cheaper—or better.

After the strain of such a day of impressing one's personality, the evening finds the impressor run down and low in spirits. The stillness of his house is pronounced. The ticking of the clock rings in his ears with the magnified beat of a high fever.

I go then into that room. And stand there—seeking companionship. Whereas it is even more still and vault-like than in the rest of the house. I move about hoping to create an image, to breathe a perfume. I do not know what I hope.

I have come to the conclusion that there is in me a disturbing insufficiency. I am not of a fine and sensitive fibre. I exist in a stolid calm that has no pulsation. There is no range from zenith to abysmal depths—in me.

Hardly a month ago my life was wrenched asunder. Of that I seem to have made no manifestation except by a childish desire to keep the place where she lived just as it was. I am sure I carry no mark of melancholy in my face, no sign of any grief. I am stolid. Even this too-great misfortune awakes nothing of the heroic in me. I simply remain dull, alone, commonplace.

But alone. The very insufficiency of my reaction to this torturing thing makes that loneliness more vivid. I go to her room and find the

little framed picture of the Villa d'Este she had taken from the wall down-stairs and hung so she would see it when she awoke, the snap-shot of myself stuck untidily in the mirror, the table by her bed with the magazine she had been last reading lying upon it: I find that I am not consoled. I conceived there would be a balm of companionship there. Instead I hardly know what. But not balm. There is in the room only the vibrating hum of silence, the noise of my own footsteps, the creaking door. I cannot stay in the place.

April 20th. I have not written here for several evenings. I have been writing a long report for Mr. Clark upon the results of my missionary work. Having finished it, I have decided that I will not send it. The matter is too vital. I must go to New York.

It is strange how this new position affects me. I find myself expanding to it, gradually. This morning I looked at my first crocus bloom and was thinking what a surprise it must be to the homely crocus bulb, when April comes—and the hot sun, to suddenly find itself a flower. I am by no means a flower but I feel a trifle of the same involuntary change.

The business of our company in this city is in a wretched state. Fifteen or twenty years ago the Appalachian outdistanced the field on the strength of an idea. But an idea does not last

forever. The grain of musk after years loses its sweetness. The inspiration of 1905 has a much reduced leverage in 1921.

Had Faulkner not lost his grip, he would have seen this. Fifteen years ago we had no competitors; now there are a dozen. They are all pouring their products into a saturated market. In this critical situation the weakness of the Appalachian is that we are trying to sell the world what we decided in 1905 it needed, instead of what the world itself decides it needs now.

Just one instance of that. During the war this city was overbuilt with factories and commercial buildings. Now ninety per cent of the construction is for housing. And you cannot sell our factory sash in set sizes for apartment houses and dwellings. The public has been educated. It used to feel that the definition of architecture was high ceilings and brownstone steps. Now the average citizen distinguishes between a building in an architectural style—and just a building. The Appalachian is being strangled by education.

It will be no easy matter to drive that thought into Mr. Clark's head or into the heads of the old-time board of directors. If old C. P. were only in harness!

I know I shall be ineffectual. The more in earnest I am the more hesitant I am in speech. If something would only happen to give me the

motive power to tell them where they are going and when they may expect to get there.

We are now comfortably and profitably installed in our new offices in the warehouse building. There is a little grumbling but I think everyone is glad to have his position under any conditions. A telegram from Wyeth to-day saying he is returning. I don't know how I am going to face that man.

April 22nd. New York. If I wished a while ago to have a certain amount of roughness injected into the conference at the main office, I had the wish to-day. When I told Mr. Clark what was the matter with the Appalachian, he took offense immediately. There was nothing, he averred, the matter with the Appalachian. Business conditions, a buyers' market and so on and so on. All the standard thoughts.

I was not impressed. We fell into an argument which ended by his telling me that, though I had been appointed a branch manager, the running of the company would still be managed from Mr. Clark's office and I would not be expected to assume responsibility for it.

"But if you want to put your ideas before the Board of Directors," he concluded, tartly, "they meet to-morrow."

That is as far as I could get. I am discouraged.

This afternoon, by way of relaxation, I took a

journey to a hospital for the insane. I wanted to see a clever piece of ironwork there. The problem had been to put grilles upon the windows strong enough to prevent the patients from jumping out and inconspicuous enough to relieve them of the irking thought that they were in a jail. The type of window finally adopted had its bars matching the bars of the small-paned window sash and was an almost complete camouflage.

I was nervous in the presence of these strange inhuman beings. And yet they were disconcertingly human. While I was there a burly negro, eluding observation, entered an office and worked upon the door of a safe until he had taken it from its hinges. With this on his back he staggered into the corridor. Seeing a patient cleaning cuspidors, he shouted, "Pick up your cross and follow me." Obediently the man picked up cuspidor and mop. Others joined in, until there was a long procession, worked up to a pitch of dynamic enthusiasm. It was all so disturbingly sane. They followed their urge in blind ecstasy—not because they knew where they were going but because they were moving.

As I was leaving I saw an old fellow working on an old-fashioned magic-lantern. He made slides on which, by means of a lever, a figure could be made to saw wood or swing an axe or drive a nail. He had been working on these for years and could

not be convinced that the moving-picture machine had advanced far beyond him. His only reply to that assertion was that the magic-lantern field had not yet been developed.

April 23rd. To-day the Board of Directors gave me a hearing. Arriving early I waited in the outer office a long while waiting for the meeting to be called. As time dragged by the little courage I possessed began to leave me. I felt that I had not had experience enough in addressing men to make my arguments sure and convincing. It was not only the argument that they needed but the manner, the force.

While I sat there I had a strange encounter. I think I was wishing I could drink some stiff intoxicant that would put me in such a berserk rage that no resistance could stand before me. A visitor entered the office and, seeing me, stopped to shake hands. I cannot recall his name but I remembered him as a man who sells us hardware.

"Not long ago," he said at once, "I saw one of your energetic co-workers—in St. Augustine."

I had no need to inquire. "Wyeth," I stated.

"He was experiencing great hardship. Surf, golf, wheel-chair, beach, food, dance—no privation was too sharp for him. And everywhere with him an eternal calamity—a slender, well-dressed calamity, with eyes the color of the sea and a cloak the color of the sand."

I suppose he thought I was demented or suddenly stricken dumb. He hurried away—and I believe I had made no coherent reply. I did not resume my seat after he had gone, but stood there looking out of the window across the shipping on the gray river. At a distance her eyes did sometimes appear gray just like the river.

As I stood there, forgetful of the others in the room, I could see only the beach and Wyeth—and Doris. I was ridiculous, certainly, standing there gripping the edge of the table. The berserk rage had come.

The messenger who presently announced that I was to go into the Directors' room, must have spoken to me several times before I realized the intent of his words; for the young women in the room were looking at me curiously as if I were some irrational creature.

In the Directors' room I received a cool reception. Mr. Clark was silent, the directors wrapped in a glum, premeditated inattention. In any other frame of mind I would have been upset by this. I had expected, had felt that I was entitled to expect, to be ushered into the presence of a deliberative body—fair and unprejudiced. But since then, thinking of the matter, I have come to the conclusion that men, collectively, in council, are not deliberative. The great achievements of the world have been thought out in solitude.

In mass they experience a throw-back to physical force. In legislatures, in Congress, they use the voice not to carry ideas—which are already set—but as a bludgeon to paralyze the activities of others.

In my observation a man most frequently carries into conference a crystallized belief. He either forces that belief through or, finding it unalterably opposed, submits, quite unconvinced, to compromise. Barring ridicule. If his position is made to appear ridiculous, he writhes out of it.

In my wrought-up condition I seemed insensible to personal affront. The sensitiveness that would ordinarily have thrown me off balance was proofed against rebuff. The directors appeared to me as merely a group of men who had made up their minds and did not want to be bothered.

I cannot remember all I said to them. It occurred to me—as an inspiration—to explain to them my visit to the insane asylum. Uplifted by their fidgeting, I spoke with satisfactory irrelevance of the fellow who worked on his magic-lantern, refusing to progress, remaining where he had been twenty years before, overlooking the moving-picture machine which now completely eclipsed him. A face looked up.

“Young man,” growled the director, “what has this chatter to do with us?”

“Does it mean nothing to you,” I asked, “that

the magic-lantern was in full swing at just about the time Mr. Faulkner was perfecting his steel sash? Does it mean nothing to you that a generation has passed since the Faulkner sash was at the peak of its remunerative value?"

"Just as remunerative now," snapped he.

"That is what this fellow thinks about his magic-lantern."

If I had not had this unnatural strength, I shouldn't have dared to do that. The director rose to his feet, fiery red.

"Are you trying to insult me?"

"No. I am the one that is being insulted here. I bring constructive suggestions to you—suggestions coming not from an amateur but from a man who has grown up in this business. And do you discuss them with me? No. You talk it over beforehand and, when I come in, you pay as little attention to me as my magic-lantern man pays to talk of moving-pictures."

Suddenly someone laughed. "If you don't listen to this persuader, he'll have you all committed to this asylum he's talking about." The voice was familiar. I then recognized for the first time Deems. He is a shareholder and has recently been elected to the Board.

"Haldane," he continued, "knows his business. You ought to be pleasant to him."

Deems' laugh turned the tide. There was some

grumbling and smouldering, but at length it was decided that to-morrow I will be allowed to present my scheme in detail.

April 25th. On the train. My mission to New York has been very successful. Yesterday I explained my ideas more fully to the Board.

I showed them a hundred or more photographs of modern buildings in styles of architecture which require steel casement sash—late Gothic, the so-called Tudor, Elizabethan, Jacobean. I cannot always differentiate between the phases of the English pre-renaissance as covered by these names, but by using them frequently I hope I impressed the directors with my ponderous learning.

I showed them a chart in the shape of a circle cut into segments of unequal size—one representing the number of buildings erected last year in which our stock-size sash could be used advantageously; another the number in which our sash could be used but a special sash would be better, and a third the number in which our sash could not be used at all.

This data had never been compiled before on just that basis, and the fact that only about twenty per cent of the buildings required our sash and that we were actually barred from about sixty per cent staggered them. These fellows, really good business men I suppose, had not believed it possible that our sash could not be used anywhere

if made *cheap* enough. They have not perceived that the last generation has learned that the ugliness that was so prized in the Victorian era is expensive now at any price.

We talked about it all day. A year ago I had worked out a method by which the machines, which now fabricate our stock-size pivoted-at-the-sides sash, could also fabricate casement sash of sizes as ordered; preserving the famous Faulkner joint, at the weak point where the metal sash-bars cross—which is the first item in the Appalachian creed.

The upshot of the conference was that the factory is to manufacture some of the casement sash, keeping a cost account to see whether this business can be made profitable.

My mission has succeeded beyond my hopes. The events of the past week or so make me feel—this is a strange thing to write—that I am becoming a little more human, a little less different.

April 26th. After reading the last words of yesterday's entry, I have been considering what a volume of condemnation lies in the word *different*. The premium is upon sameness. Civilization seems to demand standardization even in the individual. It is a die pressing down to reshape each person, on the principle that the abnormal being, resisting classification, is confusing, useless.

Sometimes there appears an abnormal person

who, refusing to be reshaped, mounts by quenchless energy infinitely higher than the standard individual. Such a person is a genius, an error of nature. A while ago I read these words:

“Nations have great men only in spite of themselves—like families. They make every effort not to have them. Therefore, the great man must, in order to exist, possess an offensive power greater than the power of resistance developed by millions of individuals.”

It is a strange thing, but I have come to believe it true, that the world is irritated by the abnormal being; and resists and retards his development except along normal lines.

I have felt this resistance to myself. I have felt the abrasion of the great die, forcing upon me disadvantage and discomfort for each item in which I am different from the regular standard individual. I find myself yielding almost imperceptibly to the form of the mould. Not being a genius, to put the world in its place by sticking my finger in its eye, I suppose it is necessary for me to give way. In fact I want to be standardized; at least, to the extent that people will understand me, perhaps I mean like me. Yet at the same time I want to remain myself. I want to retain my ideas and my way of thinking.

April 27th. This has been a terrible day.

Wyeth was in the office. He shook hands with me casually, as if the course of his life had never crossed mine except in the most pleasant way. The touch of him was repulsive.

As I sat at my desk I could see him in the outer office, moving about in his nonchalant way, calm—and unconscious of me. He would enter my office with astounding ease, “Simon, don’t you think this”—and look me square in the eye, as if he did not know the question that was burning in me.

I stood seven hours of this mental torment and then, unable to carry that uncertainty overnight, I stopped at his desk. “See me after the others go,” I said. He must have noticed the shake in my voice.

When the office was quite empty, he strolled into my room, smilingly tapping a cigarette on the back of his hand. I suppose it is his ability to take lightly the bitterest things in life that drove me to fury. I upset my chair as I rose.

“Where is she?” I shouted.

He struck the match for his cigarette. “That’s sort of a loud tone you use. Whom are you talking about?”

“You know whom.”

“No, I don’t. If you have anything to say, Simon, say it in United States.”

I could cheerfully have driven my fist into his ironic face.

"I mean Doris. You know I mean Doris."

"I swear I don't know," he burst out. There was a sudden change in his face, the flippancy all gone, so that one almost believed him. Wyeth is like that.

"You went away with her," I said firmly.

"No."

"You would say that anyway."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Possibly I should."

I lost all control. "Are you going to tell me where she is?" I demanded.

He blew out a cloud of smoke. "See here, Haldane," he said, with infuriating calm, "what are you trying to drag me into this for? You aren't all steeped in virtue yourself. I know you weren't married to her. You didn't put that over with me. Now listen, Haldane. Get this. If you keep house with that sort of lady, you mustn't be surprised if she runs off to keep house ——"

That was the last straw. In my fury, I saw only his smiling face—a target, an iniquitous thing to be destroyed. That he should profane her by rolling her name thus on his soiled tongue —— With all my power I struck him in the face.

It was a fruitless thing. Had I been normal I should have seen how it weakened my position. But I was neither normal nor wise. It was a

primitive satisfaction to see him stagger under the blow.

I don't know whether I expected him to hit back. But he did. I was so overcome by this unusual act of mine that I must have left my whole body unprotected, for in a second I was lying on the floor by my desk.

Wyeth reached for another cigarette. "Simon," he said, carelessly, "never hit a man again. You have only enthusiasm—no technique."

No human being could have endured that contemptuous smile. Also I could not forget that on account of our positions in the office it was my duty now to stand up and let him batter me into insensibility rather than appear to be afraid of him.

From the stains of my blood on the furniture and the floor, we must have fought over every inch of the floor. I remembered almost nothing of the boxing I had had at school—except that I must always be the aggressor.

He gave me a frightful pummelling. I kept in my mind through it all that I was in better physical shape than he. I do not drink nor smoke and I take regular exercise. Presently he was puffing and blowing like a porpoise.

In the midst of this rough and tumble, during which Nell's typewriter was upset, glass in the old bookcase smashed in and every small piece of

furniture overturned, I was absurdly thinking that I must have a plan. I must grasp the essential and ignore detail. I can laugh now at this efficiency view-point as applied to a fist-fight, but it was deadly serious then.

My advantage was that he was out of breath. Clearly the essential was to press that. I kept my eye on the next to the bottom button of his vest. I concentrated on that as a focus. It seemed an hour before the opening appeared. I was dizzy. For some reason I could see out of only one eye. At last, for a fraction of a second, nothing between me and the button! All my strength went into it. I have the cut of his watch-charm on my knuckle now. There he was lying very still on the floor.

After a time he stood up. I tried not to appear as dizzy as I was. "Simon," he said, holding out a hand, "we have been a couple of fools. Let's cut out this nonsense."

I did not shake hands with him.

To-night I am bruised and sore. I can see out of but one eye, so that this record runs up-hill as I write. I know that I ought to be ashamed to put it down—but, sore, crippled, one-eyed as I am at this glorious moment, by the living Jupiter, I have had a satisfactory day.

CHAPTER VI

THE knocker on the door of Simon's house clacked against its brass escutcheon.

He started. A footfall on those steps, a hand on that latch, the falling of that knocker against its base revived in him a mad, an impossible hope. The hope was always there—quiescent, groundlessly alive. When he opened the door of his house in the dusk of evening and closed it gently behind him, he first stood silent, expectant, listening to the quiet within the still walls—daring to think that some day a board would creak beneath a light step or a voice be singing. And not having the will to assure himself that such things could not be.

He knew that he was absurd not to take a businesslike inventory of his own situation, to write off his loss and start again with an even balance. Some crying need that gave her no room for choice had driven her to seek the shelter of his roof and the obscurity she would find there. That crisis would not reoccur. In fact her need for obscurity would doubtless prompt her, having once escaped the city, never to return.

It was difficult to give way to that deadly certainty. Where he treasured certain memories, he

wished to treasure certain hopes, however tenuous. When that very morning a man, who had a thorough and immutable reputation as a liar, had entered Simon's office and spoken to him a word he would have given a fortune to believe was true, he had to clench his fists and take his soul in his hands to make himself realize that it was a lie.

He could still see Ray Wyeth's face as he spoke—the most frank, disingenuous face, stamped with truth and honesty yet covering a maze of guilt and guile. It was evident that, since Simon was the power, Wyeth wished to obtain favor at any cost. Yet it seemed impossible that any man could have made a lie so earnest.

"I swear to God, Simon, she did not go with me. I asked her to but she would not go."

It was impossible to reply to him, to discuss the matter. But the brevity of it was artful—suggesting sincerity. If he had gone on, one might have found the lie in some word or inflection. As it was it rested in Simon's mind almost with the weight of truth.

The knocker again! Why did he not hasten to the door, instead of standing there computing the short list of facts favorable to him? Why prolong a pleasant uncertainty beyond reason, and try meanwhile to justify himself into thinking there was any uncertainty?

A plain, ordinary, right-angled human being, instantly upon the note of the knocker, would have dashed down the stair throbbing with excitement, and thrown open the door so that every dish in the house rattled. Simon throbbed with excitement, but the irregular form of his impulse caused him to dally with hope—knowing he was going to be disappointed.

He descended the stair and opened the door.

No pleasant and comforting apparition there. No delightfully shivering person who would rush in to hold slender-fingered hands before the glow of the fire. No soft bubble of laughter, no thousand questions bundled into one paragraph, no veil and hat to be doffed with much engaging gesticulation. No excited ejaculations, no staccato comment upon the keenness of the wind, the overpopulation of the street-car, the beautiful man thereon—keying up all the humdrum routine of the day into the realm of drama.

Instead, the opening of the door brought forth a reverberating explosion. An explosion of laughter in high falsetto key, in timbre and volume not unlike the note of a glass pitcher dropped from a height upon the sidewalk.

"Two bad pennies," shrieked a voice, "always turning up when least expected!"

A vast structure of woman filled the room. The rectilinear satellite who followed lost

identity beside the magnificence of her contour. He was as her vanity case, her umbrella—a mere appendage.

“Mr. Haldane, we been a-meaning to come over for quite a spell. But Sam Hollis here he’s so hard to move—and that obstinate.”

She distributed the square-footage of her outer garments upon chairs, the top of the bookcase and the satellite, as the spirit moved her.

“Always putting it on me,” whispered the satellite. “You know how it is, Simon. You been married too.”

Mrs. Hollis settled herself comfortably in an ample chair. “My handkerchief, Sammy. In the coat, or in one of your pockets, or in my little bag. Well, Mr. Haldane, speaking of being married, how about the little wife? Such a sweet body! So genteel!”

Simon rubbed one hand into the palm of the other, staring at the fire. “I have not heard—recently.”

She beamed maternally. “And, the last time you heard, was she enjoying good health? Not in that pocket, Sammy. Trust a man never to find anything you sent him for. Now I could step right over there and put my hand ——”

Simon bent over.

“Why, thank you, Mr. Haldane. What an elusive thing a handkerchief is! Never mind,

Sammy, don't agonize over it any more. Mr. Haldane has found it for you. Pardon me, Mr. Haldane, I didn't catch your last remark."

He drew in his breath. "When I last heard, she was well."

"Sends you, of course, lots of love and kisses?"

Simon thrust the poker viciously into the fire. With enviable strength of wrist, he turned over the logs, making an indifferent fire out of a good one. He seemed to hear the rasping hoarseness of Hollis's whisper and turned the logs again, noisily. He stood up triumphant, red in the face.

"Pleasant weather we are having. Almost like spring."

"It's a cold-breeder though. Sammy's got the sniffles. I got the sniffles. There's so many germs about. Sammy was saying while you was improving the fire that you hadn't told us where your wife was."

"She wasn't my wife."

Those were the words he almost uttered. Why did they sit there placidly worrying him with questions—goading him into telling them? If sufficiently exasperated he knew he would cast caution aside and fling the information over them as if it were a bucket of cold water. It might be even pleasant to see them writhe under the unexpectedness of it.

But, if possible to continue withholding infor-

mation, he would stand firm. She and her husband were party to casting the bonds of pseudo-matrimony over him. Let them carry on their own fiction. He would not assume the humiliating position of explaining. He would not thus give them ground for casting aspersion upon the woman they had called his wife.

"I haven't her itinerary here right now," he said, not very resourcefully. "She may be in—Buffalo—now."

"Ah, yes. That was where you made her acquaintance?"

"No."

"Why," cried Mrs. Hollis, disappointed, "I was told that on authentic authority. Well, Mr. Hal-dane, these are the best days of your life. The rosate days of your honeymoon! I hope your wife does not remain away long. I remember when I was a slip of a girl ——"

Simon, blessedly relieved now from reply, relaxed. The continuing hum of her voice surged against his ear—like surf rolling in, bursting and seething up the sand. The unending quality of it filled one with a comforting awe. Differing from the ocean, she would stop presently. And one would wonder what it was all about. But while it continued, one was soothed and free from responsibility.

But Hollis, who had lived by the seaside too

long, was not soothed. He made the error of trying to pick out verbs and prepositions and allowing the words to form themselves into sentences and ideas; instead of taking it all as a general conglomerate of continuing sound—as nature intended. Thus he lost much of the sweetness of life.

He rose presently and paced the room, ending by tactfully showing his principal planet, the face of a nicked watch. The sound came gradually to an end.

"How time goes. I had no i-dea it was so late."

Simon roused himself. "The fire has died down. Have you been warm enough?"

"My, yes. Sammy he likes the house hot. But I carry so much flesh I like it cool. However—I've trained myself to take the world, hot and cold, good and bad, just as it comes."

In the solitude of the narrow street the great lady strode monumentally along, relieving her mind in the approximate direction of Hollis. "Something's not quite right there, Sammy. Not quite right! I got a feeling that their honeymoon days is not so rosate as they ought to be."

"Yes," whispered Hollis. "Let's take the other cars. It's shorter."

After their departure Simon sat down at his desk to write in the diary. But there seemed to

be nothing to say. The things he could write about were dull. Concerning the one subject of greatest interest to him there was nothing to say. He fingered the book uncertainly, letting the pages turn under his thumb, as one idly flips a pack of cards. The white surface of the pages flitting by was grayed almost imperceptibly.

After a moment the thing impinged upon his mind. There was other writing in the book beside his own. He flipped the pages again but did not find it. Thereupon he started at the beginning turning the leaves one by one.

At length the thing he had seen. To his suddenly keyed-up consciousness the familiar shapings of the letters brought him a quick and fleeting vision. A vision of a slender person, whose skin was translucently white, whose hair flamed where the light fell upon it, bending over to write in the same book in which he was to write! That all these days there had been between those covers the companionship he had deeply desired—the trace of her hand close to the page where he wrote.

Athirst, he drank the written words, standing in the upper hall, where the late moon, entering the window, competed with the dim light beside his shoulder. He did not realize that he stood or that the light was dim. He needed neither light nor comfort nor ease to assist the reading of that page. The page was all of those.

PART SIX
DORIS, FAREWELL

CHAPTER I

March 3rd. This book lies upon the lower shelf of the table in my room. It is unused and dusty, evidently discarded. Since such an unusual thing has occurred to me I have decided to make a record of it here.

Some blame may fall upon Mr. Haldane for his part in sheltering me. Perhaps a statement that he acted out of pure kindness may save him from embarrassment. When I have left this house, this book will furnish him with more explanation than I can give him now.

I believe he does not know that the detectives who entered his house the night I did were searching for me. He feels that their visit was quite accidental.

I had that night eluded them temporarily. But there was no way of hiding one's tracks in the snow. Sooner or later they would overtake me. My mistake had been in walking under the marquee of a moving-picture theatre. I saw them standing close by the wall and realized too late that they had recognized me.

I suppose I did not do the most desirable thing when I stepped aboard a street-car—already moving. I saw them take a taxi and discerned then

that the sooner I disembarked the better. Where the car turns into Severn Street I stepped off. It was not a strictly ladylike act, for the car was travelling briskly. But an emergency is an emergency. I walked into Charlemagne Place to hide until the taxi went by and found myself trapped in a cul-de-sac.

The taxi, when its occupants discovered that I was no longer in the car, turned back. I could not escape into the lighter thoroughfare without being seen. I could not go on because Charlemagne Place was deep with almost unbroken snow.

It would not be long before they picked up my track at the point where I had stepped off the car. About four minutes stood between me and capture. Grasping at a straw, I walked down the little street. The only ray of hope appeared when someone opened a door, throwing a gleam of yellow light on the snow. This was an omen. If not an invitation, it seemed at least a chance. The door was closed when I got there, but I knocked. I noticed hopefully a newly-made trail leading on from where mine stopped.

No one answered. In desperation I tried the door, found it unlocked and entered. From certain danger to uncertain! One had no choice and but little time to think.

Hiding behind the curtains I was palsied with fright during the unending visit of the detective

persons. But Mr. Haldane's innocence was complete. I cannot express the relief that possessed me. I had been certain that the owner of the house would either show me the door or else give me up. I now felt assured that Mr. Haldane would do neither. It was with an unexpected feeling of confidence that I at length lay down on a strange couch and went to sleep.

If anyone, a week before, had prophesied that I would do such a thing, I would have said he was a raving maniac.

In the morning the difficult thing was to provide a plausible excuse for being there. I happened to read in the newspaper on the table that many girl mill-workers had been driven from their homes by strikers. When Mr. Haldane came, I showed this paragraph to him, giving the impression that I was one of the girls. To lend color to it, I used as much of what I conceived to be mill-argot as I could—though after a time I forgot even to do that.

Mr. Haldane was very nice. He took great pains trying to get a room for me somewhere. But even before he had found a probable place, I had decided I would rather stay on with him!

Just like that! The extremity in which I found myself can best be judged by this calm conclusion.

I did go out later in the day. I had a premonition that the detectives, after coming to the end

of their other scent, would return. I am certain that they did return, but certainly they found no trace of me. I spent the day in an obscure corner of the public library and was brought back in a flivver that was meant for telephone operators. I hope the chill the Recording Angel experienced in noting down my story to Mr. Haldane was mitigated by the fact that I really did ride in the Tel. Opp. flivver.

I wonder how many hot ploughshares I shall have to walk over barefoot in the next world to pay for the lies I told that night. The illness legend was the hardest one for me to establish. When I fainted I judged the distance to a millimeter and even then I was afraid he would not catch me. And the little observing doctor! If it had not been for a convenient drip from the bedroom radiator which ran the thermometer up to a hundred and three he would have discovered my fiction.

The one thing I was not prepared for was the appellation "Mrs. Haldane." I was not alert enough to prevent the doctor pinning it upon me.

March 7th. Another Monday and no news. It does not seem possible that this cruel thing should continue to drag on and on. I have tried to be steady. I have tried to remember that no amount of weeping into the pillow on that bed will make it easier for me or bring the end more quickly.

If I could but wait without hoping or, hoping, be given *one* hopeful sign! Just one. There I am weeping now—pitying myself. No heroine I.

My position here is of a most delicate nature. I am Scotchly married to Simon and by that I suppose I have smirched my career beyond repair. I might look with greater dismay upon this were my other problems not so disquieting. No more to-night. In fact I have but little more to say in this book.

March 15th. Tuesday. Yesterday news at last! I am nearly burning up with excitement.

I am going away. I am aflame with joy, yet I am sorry to leave this abode which has been so great a help to me and where I have been contented.

The entertaining pinhead Ray Wyeth thinks he is going away with me. He came to this house to-day and I have nearly missed my train waiting for him to remove his bulk from our marble steps. I have written Simon a note and will place this book with it on the table.

Good-bye, little Charlemagne Place.

Simon stood a long while unmoving. Then, as one still dreaming, he walked to the window, the book in his hand. Without, the moon fell on smooth squares between the fences. In the shadows hung darkness from which every detail

had been eliminated. An unimportant hollow square it was, behind the buildings on four streets. It slept in non-urban quiet, while not far away into the vague sky there rose the lighted office tower, never-sleeping, where toilers struggled day, dusk and early dawn.

Through a rift in the canyon glowed the lighted street beyond—contemptuous of the night. It turned back unobserved the tiny wattage of the moon, shunting such mere loveliness to the areas where the city piled its boxes. The obsolescent, pre-Victorian moon!

“See,” once she had said, “there is a moon, even in the city.”

Again she was there beside him—in spirit, in soul, in tenacious charm.

CHAPTER II

MR. SIMON HALDANE,
Appalachian Steel Products Company.

My dear Mr. Haldane:

In conformity with the program of this Company to broaden the sales field for its products, it has been decided to inaugurate immediately the manufacture of special casement sash. Our machinery is now being altered to make possible the fabrication of sash of any size and general design, provided our standard cold-rolled sections are used.

Recent improvement in the Company's financial status has made it possible for us to launch an extensive advertising campaign to introduce this new feature.

It is recalled that you personally indorsed this change when in New York last. Please govern your sales program in accordance with the foregoing.

Respectfully,
THEREON W. CLARK, *President.*

Simon threw down the letter on his desk. "Writing to Abraham Lincoln they would have said, 'It is recalled that you personally indorsed the Emancipation Proclamation.' I wonder what they mean by 'the recent improvement in the Company's financial status.'"

Nell picked up a morning paper. "Hadn't you seen this?" She drew a line beside a paragraph, folded the paper and laid it before him.

Word has been received to-day from Tia Juana to the effect that the long-lost Julia Faulkner has been found. Fear had been expressed at one time that she had been captured by bandits in Mexico. From a reliable source it has been learned that, in discussing her father's affairs, she stated that she was now fully prepared to clear up his accounts.

All of Faulkner's own money, it has been rumored, as well as other large funds in his control were pledged to cover the December drop in Texas Imperial Valley. The spectacular rise in that stock, following a recent Supreme Court decision, makes it now certain, if his money was so entangled, that he is solvent with a large factor of safety. In sympathy with the news the stock of the Appalachian Company sold to-day at a new high price.

The opinion has been expressed, however, that had Miss Faulkner returned a month ago, she would not have found herself in a position to make such a rosy report.

Simon nodded unsympathetically. "Blundered into luck," he commented. "It's a strange thing how these persons who wander off and leave the conduct of their affairs to Providence, return to find that Providence has done the job."

Other letters in his mail spoke to him concern-

ing the new sash. One from Mr. Trundle—now holding a miscellaneous sort of position in the New York office—laid before Simon certain puzzles in connection with it and asked his opinion. At the bottom of the sheet was written in a hard, copperplate chirography, "Congratulate you, Mr. Haldane. I wish you well." Simon read it again. He realized the effort those seven words had cost Trundle, the putting aside of what resentment and bitterness.

He remembered them later in the day. When all the others had left for the day, he saw Wyeth still in the large office. Wyeth was always the last of them to go—it was tactful to appear diligent. The hard-wrought gift Simon had received from Trundle came forcibly to his mind. He had a similarly difficult matter to adjust.

"Wyeth."

They were alone in the big office.

"Simon."

"You and I had a difference a while ago."

"Forget it, old man," with great heartiness.

"I can't. Point is I was wrong. I apologize—I must apologize."

"Not a word, Simon. Not a word." He held out his hand with a large gesture. Simon grasped it reluctantly. At the door Wyeth turned.

"You've heard from her?"

"No. Not a word."

As Wyeth closed the door behind him his smile disappeared. "Liar," he thought. He jammed his hat upon his head.

Simon walked along the broad street that led to the house of his aunts, where he had been invited to dinner. Like an unending flock of migrating birds whirled by the double stream of motors. At each intersecting street he saw the red curtain of the west with spires and pediments in sharp silhouette against it. The settling dusk brought out the strengthening constellation of street lights. Overhead the sky changing, shade by shade, into the purple of night, its lustrous stars too pale to claim attention against the illumination below.

In the library of his aunts' house the ladies were seated knitting. "You are so important now," said Albina, almost resentfully, "one can scarcely be allowed to talk over the telephone to you."

He had a mental picture of his aunt presenting herself for judgment before Nell's winnowing processes.

"Your young lady usually says you are in conference or are speaking over the inside telephone." That Simon should be in conference or need to talk over any other telephone when she wished to talk to him was difficult for Albina to understand. She was inclined to be dignified about it,

as if something had been arranged that she should have first been consulted about.

"How many persons in the office," queried Agnes, "are subject to your direction?"

Simon spoke approximately.

"Really?" How could Simon possibly think of enough things for so many to do?

"But you *must* not let anyone in the Company know about the young woman who—who lived in your house." Both ladies flushed pinkly.

"Oh, yes. They already know."

They gazed at him in awe. He was astonished to perceive that his quasi-marital experience had given him a prestige in their eyes—had put them in an unrealized state of envious, grovelling disapproval.

"It is hard to appraise you, Simon. Yet you have a certain way with you. You are unusual."

"Unusual?"

"Yes—ah—different."

"Simon," observed Agnes, with finality, "is of a fascinating irregularity."

Albina nodded. "His next step must be to marry. It's what he needs—to steady him."

"With his prospects, Albina, scores of girls would be *eager* to marry him."

"I am not quite sure I share your optimism," said Simon.

Scores of girls! Of course, he reflected in the

pleasant solitude of his homeward walk, that would mean consecutively and not polygamously. But they *had* asserted that he possessed a certain charm. He wanted to believe that. Anxiously he wanted to believe it.

He let his mind wander into pleasant fields. His dream carried him. The unheeded buildings moved by. His footsteps, automatically directing him, echoed against the evening stillness. And presently the dark house.

And in him a pathetic joyfulness—a hopeless anticipation.

CHAPTER III

SIMON never opened the door of his empty house without this feeling of expectancy. The emotions of the past died slowly in him, and the silent, unchanged abode confronted him each time as an unaccountable thing. He stood with his hand upon the knob, the stillness convincing him. Reluctantly he closed the door, ceasing to listen—yet an unbeliever.

He touched a match to the kindling in the fireplace and, when the blaze grew, moved his chair into the circle of its warmth. A book lay idle upon his knees while he watched the flame flowing over the span of logs.

When he turned his eyes to the book, he found himself reading with a drowsy inattention. Presently he marked his place in it with a piece of newspaper he found in his pocket—a picture Nell had given him—and resigned himself to pleasant ease. The enshadowed face of the picture lady, her frank lower limbs concealed, looked over the rim of the book.

Why should he read when he was filled with this pleasant presentiment of something about to happen? The book upon his lap was unimportant,

distant. A vague garment of content enwrapped him. He gazed contentedly at golden waves of flame against black logs—afar off. Dimly he heard the unsteady crackling of the wood. A comfortable peace of mind surrounded him, building a small world far from hearths and rooms and books, dependent upon no logic save a certain hope and an intense desire.

It was strange how memory entwined itself with perfume. He remembered that someone had propounded the theory that it was because of the proximity of the olfactory nerve to the brain. The propounder had not, however, spoken of the power of the mental picture, conversely, to restore a faint analogy of the odor.

He remembered the gentle perfume—as of a light breeze blowing to a hilltop from a blossoming valley of orchard.

With it came definitely the picture of the dark dress against a very white skin, the necklace of beads of a coal-like substance whose upper facets caught the light, the nimble fingers following a bobbin through intricate figures, a foot concealed beneath her, the other hovering over a spot on the floor where lay indecently her slipper.

He had heard no sound in the room—no reverberation of a closing door, no footstep, no moving chair. Yet he was conscious that something had happened.

He did not look up at once—possibly from fear that the thing had not really come to pass; more probably because, if it had come to pass, it was too tremendous a matter for one to be convinced of suddenly. Even now the beating of his heart was almost audible.

At length . . .

She had moved up a chair to the warmth of the fire. The coal-like beads twinkled gold in the light. The rising and falling blaze laid a warm flush upon her snowy neck. Her hands lay in her lap. He had marvelled often at the quality of repose that had permitted her fingers to lie unmovingly clasped before her. That was a patrician quality denoting ease and sureness.

It was strange that when one expected her to be excited, wrought up, she should present this marvellous air of unruffled calm. She ought to have been wrought up now, over this unexpected meeting.

Instead she was smiling easily, enjoying his excitement, enjoying the fact that she increased it by exhibiting none herself.

She was speaking. He recognized the unstable gravity of her face, the serious mouth thinly concealing laughter, the eyes serene but ready to burst into flame. "Talk, Simon," she said. "Don't *think* at me."

Words strangely familiar. He found himself

speaking. "What I think is so much more exciting than what I could say."

"That's too indirect for me."

He hesitated, striving to think of something diverting. "But you're not talking," she continued, blasting hope of inspiration.

"I am glad you have come." That was what he had really been thinking, while he was hoping to evolve a *bon mot*. Why should she have come if she did not believe in him, if she had not been thinking of him, if she did not like him? The humiliating possibility that he had been to her merely a queer person who had helped her over a difficult place and had then been thrown aside as of no value had been the great devastating blow of his life. That she should actually have come—unexpected, even though he had been expecting her,—was a glorious dream. He could not believe she was there. Yet his soul expanded as he looked upon her.

"You make such pretty speeches," she murmured. "You are such a flirt."

"It was not a pretty speech," he exclaimed, indignantly.

She rose and walked to the rear window. He was faintly surprised that he did not follow her. Instead he sat still, content that his following should be merely with his eyes, content that she should be there in person again.

"There is a moon," she told him.

That was strange, because in looking at the sky earlier in the evening he had made the calculation that the moon would not rise until late. Possibly this was merely one of her urges to say one thing and mean another. What he was eagerly hoping was that she would, as she used to, sit on the arm of the couch beside him. As if divining that thought she came toward him, humming. Presently her feet were resting on the frame of his chair, her arms on her knees as of old.

Could he believe this? The hand lying idle. Then both of his own enclosing it, holding it, possessing it, keeping it. The mischievous eyes, doubly mischievous, provoking. Then the hand suddenly withdrawn, the eyes even more tantalizing.

"Simon, you're not ——"

The blood rushed through him tingling. She had almost said it. That great award nearly his. Instead she brushed her hand lightly over his face, laughing at him. The touch of her was magic, opening great vistas for him. That thrill made him want to take her, to hold her. But he did not move.

"Where have you been?" he asked, prosaically.

"I have been travelling. A long way—El Paso—I was hiding ——"

He seemed suddenly to have become confused.

The experience was like a dream in which identities change. She suddenly seized the quill pen from the table and touched his lips.

"Poor Simon," she said, gently, "when a thing seems pleasant you believe it can scarcely be permanent."

That was what he had been thinking. His pleasure was so keen, it was unbelievable that such a thing had actually happened. He no longer had to think that the one person to whom he had reached out and whom he had loved—if that were the right word—had left him without a kindly thought. She was here now. She had removed, by her presence, that deep-burned scar.

He did not know how long he sat staring before him, but presently when he looked up she was not there.

He had not been conscious of her going. In fact she had not really gone. He heard her light step. She had put on a cloak.

"If you are going to kiss me, Simon," she whispered, adorably close, "you'd best hurry."

Of course she did not mean it. It was her jest—based upon the fact that he was supposed not to want to kiss her, that he believed himself old and staid and not interested in loving, in passionately craving a thing so light, so adorable. But why did she think of leaving?

"I wish you wouldn't go."

"Must."

"Please stay."

"No can do," she said, very low.

She would return, of course. Anyway she had been there. That was the important fact, the epoch of his life. She bent over him. He breathed the fragrance of her hair.

He reached out his arms—too slowly. He touched nothing—saw nothing. The house was quiet. There had been no opening of a door, no sound. Yet as he looked he saw that she was not in the room.

He was more acutely conscious now of the sound of the fire, of its heat, of the weight of the book. The things about him were coming into focus. There was the ring of a bell near by, which developed into the striking of the clock on his mantelpiece.

The couch which he had thought was close beside him was in another part of the room. The realization came to him slowly. He flexed his stiffened muscles. Rising slowly he strode from the fireplace to the stair and back again. Looking fixedly at the clock, he was at length aware that he had been asleep for an hour.

He stared unbelievably at the distant couch, the quill pen on the table, the rear window of the room with its drawn shade. After a moment his whole body relaxed. His head dropped. The

hands unclasped hung expressionlessly at his side. He had gone through in effigy a stirring imitation of joy, pride and great exaltation.

She had not been there!

CHAPTER IV

A SPARK from the fire leaped out upon the hearth; mechanically he pushed it back with his foot. He returned his book to its place on the shelf and on his way back, turned the key in the front door. He covered the embers with ashes and pushed his chair away from the hearth. He went again to the front door, to find that he had already locked it.

At the rear window, raising the curtain, he saw that there was no moon. The memory was alive in him of her standing there. He drew the shade and walked slowly back to the table to turn out the light. His hand rose to the chain. Yet he did not touch it. He could not think of darkness. His soul was surrounded by black fog, through which he could not grope. Physical light sustained him.

He was wrenched suddenly from his abstraction. Why did they ring the bell—jarring against his taut nerves? No disappointment, no heaviness of spirit was so deserving of consideration that by a careless touch of the finger they would not call him out of it to talk over the telephone.

A female voice asking if this were Mr. Haldane.

Another female voice informing him that Mr. Clark was in the city and wished to see him at his hotel in the morning. Mr. Haldane was to come prepared to leave for Buffalo at noon. At length the receiver comfortably clicked against the metal giving him again solitude.

As he sat absently holding the telephone instrument in his hand, he still seemed to breathe the gentle perfume. The wafted symbol, sweet, arresting—— It was but a memory—a mirage which persisted, torturing him.

One went through life, hoping, desiring. Always, like this evanescent perfume, there lay beyond him achievement—something slight, intangible, which until attained seemed infinitely precious. When grasped it was but a grain of musk: the power to purchase, a place to stand where more people could see one, a diminishing content.

A man attempted to arrange his life. Out of the vast possible range of circumstances, he chose *one* circumstance. He chose one high position, or one woman, or one figure in dollars and cents. His untutored instinct prompted him and, blindly, he staked everything on attaining this especial thing, his specifications made narrow. Riches achieved at precisely the business or profession he chose; fame of the brand he dictated; a woman selected, for whom no counterpart however close

would be accepted. If he did not attain the exact goal, his spirit was plunged into melancholy.

Simon saw how narrow was his target. Success in business was his; and an unbelievable esteem from his fellow men. These two sources of happiness he had once believed impossible. Having been granted these—now he asked for a woman, a certain woman, who was denied him. The wound from that was deep, sharp, blotting out all the joy from the other achievements.

He stood clasping and unclasping his hands, thinking how absurd it was to make his happiness—the success or failure, it seemed, of his life—dependent upon a single factor. And that factor a thing far removed from his control. Yet sound reasoning would not check his yearning. While one's heart beat and the blood coursed in one's body, a wound was a wound. His hand raised to the light. Darkness could not be heavier.

The morning sun on Severn Street was not cheering to Simon. He was annoyed at having to visit Mr. Clark at the hotel. Business ought to be transacted in offices, not in hotel rooms. When he found on his desk a letter saying that none other than the famous Julia Faulkner was to be with Mr. Clark, he was still more perturbed. Of course, one must expect that sort of thing from such a one as she. She would not, in her mag-

nificent and independent aloofness, come to a mere office to confer with a mere branch manager. Not she! Not this lady, who had calmly embarked on a pleasure trip when millions belonging to others were at stake.

She would prefer to loll at ease in a chintz chair in a gilt hotel sitting-room, for the purpose of hearing his report—wholly bored, wishing this necessary gesture of obeisance would come to an end. Of course subordinates must grovel. It was necessary that they put her foot on the crown of their heads in token of their lowly subserviency. Her gesture in return must be one of proper ennui.

At the hotel desk he asked for Mr. Clark. The female at the switchboard fumbled about for a while, talking in low, indistinguishable tones. Finally she explained that Mr. Clark was now in conference with Miss Faulkner, but if Mr. Hal-dane would go to such-and-such a room, Mr. Clark and Miss Faulkner would see him in about twenty minutes.

Annoyed, and with a humiliating consciousness of inferiority, his body rose and his spirits sank until he was thrust out friendless on a far-distant floor. Over soft carpets he sought a gloomy door whose brass numerals corresponded with the number given him by the girl below. A knock, a nervous wait, and the door swinging slowly open.

A maid, garbed to proclaim the same servility he now felt growing in him, ushered him into a large room whose wide windows, after the dim light of the corridor, blinded him.

As the maid disappeared, he groped for a chair and sank into the bodily comfort of its depths. The room began to come into focus. A silky rug intriguingly blue like a cool evening sky; wadded furniture suggesting indolence; two small pictures against an ivory wall; cerulean-shaded floor lamps; and at the far end against the light from the windows a writing-desk:—this was the picture. At the desk, silhouetted, a secretary was writing.

To him, dully observing, it all seemed part of the furnishing—rugs, pictures, lamps, desk and lady writing thereon. Each was equally unaware of him. He and the woman and the pictures and the furniture were all impersonal—dedicated to the service of the Faulkner woman, who kept them all there, placed as she desired, awaiting her pleasure.

The writing woman paused, raised her head and appeared to be looking at him. It would have been polite to speak to her but she had the indistinct air of not quite seeing him. Presently, no doubt, she would ask him, in the manner of secretaries, his name, business, height, weight, girth and so on. In fact, she was rising now. As

she approached him, moving with a familiar step, he rose also, the information upon his tongue.

The light no longer shone behind her. He did not speak. He did not move. He stood transfixed, his fingers pressing down upon the table beside him.

He must not give way. He must not surrender to the hallucination. If he remained quiet until he could regain control ——

A hand touched his arm, a solid, real substance against his sleeve. It was not a person garbed in black. There was no dress falling away at the arms, no coal-black necklace whose facets caught the light. Instead a sleeveless thing of burnt orange, of a material soft and smooth, a tiny gold chain against the orange, a gold something at the wrist, a gentle light high on the curve of one shoulder; and the eyes, dark, soft.

“Doris!”

She nodded as if confirming an uncertain statement. Conflicting emotions flamed in him—painful joy, a stunned unbelief, a delirious desire to express the intoxication of the moment, a dark fear lest this was something else to be withdrawn.

“Why should you be here?” The situation must be grasped, understood.

“Waiting. Waiting to see ——”

“All of us waiting. Last night—I thought—I dreamed you were ——”

"I went to your house," she said, astoundingly.
"You were asleep."

He reached out uncertainly—and then caught her hands. He did not pause to conjecture whether she would like it. When she let them stay he did not observe willingness or unwillingness on her part.

His only thought was that she had returned and that her return was a portent. She was the centre of his life. He could not express that except by touching her, reassuring himself that actually she were there. And if his strength went into that clasp it was because of the depth of the hurt her going had inflicted. It was because, returning, she was balm and cure and sustenance.

She possessed herself of her hands again. "I have been miserable. It was hard to have to steal away as I did. But the slightest misstep would have spoiled everything. I kept thinking what you were saying about me. I wished every day I could come back."

"And I. For a long while I had a sickening fear—but I can't talk of that. What I thought was that it was all explained by the fact—that I was—queer."

"Why, Simon ——"

"I am a second—an imperfect product."

"One has to live with you, Simon—to be married to you," she interpolated, solemnly—"to ap-

preciate. Perhaps you are not second but ——” She broke off abruptly and backed away, her hands behind her. “I promised myself I wouldn’t do—say that,” she murmured.

Say what, do what, he wondered. She eyed him with a smile tantalizingly distant.

She laughed—a little more than seemed warranted. At that moment, while he was wondering what was amusing to her, the most astounding, dramatic event of his life occurred.

A gentle knock sounded on the door of the room. Thinking of it later, he could not remember whether she had spoken or not in response to it. But almost immediately the door opened and the servilely attired maid entered, noiselessly. In her hand was a package of letters which she laid deferentially upon the smooth surface of the table. She spoke in a low tone—but with a staggering distinctness.

“There is also,” she said, “a registered package, Miss Faulkner, for which you must sign.”

CHAPTER V

THOSE were the words she used—that the name clearly spoken. He passed a bewildered hand over his brow. Dully he watched this woman writing a name on a magenta card. He could read the name as the card was passed back to the servant. It was an impossible occurrence. The smothering out of an individual and, without visible manifestation, the substitution in her stead of another. He had finished a sentence to the woman who had once been known as his wife. His next would be to the remote Julia Faulkner. Yet she was still the person who had been known as his wife.

He looked up—puzzled, almost doubting. The maid, interminably slow, crept toward the door. After a torturing wait the door finally closed, the latch speaking a final click. He was alone with the strange woman.

He heard her speaking to him and replied with a syllable that seemed appropriate. This thing changed the world. It held her infinitely far from him. It would make it necessary for her to erase—a blot—which he had placed on her life. A dull weight rested upon him. As Julia Faulkner she could think of him only as a painfully undesirable memory.

"Even your name. It's not Doris."

"No. My father called me 'Dored'—an abbreviation of something. 'Adored,' don't you think?"

He did not commit himself. The person who had lived under his roof no longer lived at all. There was no Doris. In her place one frightfully similar, walking on a path apart, inaccessible. The tie of adventurous necessity that had bound him to the other was gone. Instead an insulation of wealth, power, control. There must be no misunderstanding—he must show that he realized this separateness. "You wished to see me?" he asked, formally.

"No. And you?" she replied, seriously.

An unexpected irritation was generated in him. In her gravest moments she was viciously festive. One had to insult her into rationality. "Why," he asked, "are you sometimes Doris and sometimes this despicable Julia?"

She rippled laughter. "I am Doris when I'm waiting. For Mondays." This her absurd method of transferring an idea, giving one an infinitesimal fraction of it.

"Why Mondays?"

"The day, my child, the Supreme Court renders decisions. I was waiting *incognito* for their decision on Texas Imperial Valley. Mexico, for me, was Charlemagne Place."

Quite so. He had heard at some vague time that this Julia had been in Mexico.

"When my father's health suddenly gave way, certain financial gentlemen caught the idea that perhaps, under the circumstances, I would not go to Mexico. In that event, so much money being at stake, they wanted to know where I would go. I was recognized on the train, followed and —— But that is an old story to you."

"Why run away when ——"

"Surely you know. Father had used millions of the Appalachian money to hold his TIV stock. He was accustomed thus to shift about funds under his control. Many big men do it. But if the facts had been brought out he would have been proved an embezzler."

It was nearly as difficult for him to hear as for her to say. He knew what restless trepidation had been hers at his house. "A nearly insane desperation," she said, "drove me to stay as I did with you."

They stood by the high-up windows. Below lay the grinding city, the die that had been reshaping him—so that he would be available and able to cope with problems like the present one. The problem was here, yet he felt that he was not able to cope with it.

"How," he asked, dully, "will you erase this thing? Why—it can't be done. You cannot

make a denial that you were married to me. That would only make it worse."

As the obscure young woman he had thought her, she could have lived in another town without suffering from her stay in his house. As Julia Faulkner her history was, or would be, known everywhere. It was known that she had lived with him as his wife. Deems knew it. The Appalachian office knew it. It was certain to be revealed that the woman they had known as Mrs. Haldane was Julia Faulkner.

A hush—a long stillness. She whispered. "Would you consider," she breathed, "*not* making a denial of it?"

A great mountain collapsing. A dark foreboding thing powdering into fine dust. In the room a rosy light. She was a goddess who spoke to him on equal terms, a person far beyond him who stood close, a creature unattainable whose warm hand lay on his arm. These things were hard to believe.

But what she proposed was equally impossible. He began to speak. Her finger rested on his moving lips.

"Yes, I know. But remember—your wife—is a person of power. We will certainly, as you are primly thinking, have to be more firmly married than we are at present."

It appeared hedged about with impossibility.

"If we were—married—to-day, this date would not explain why two months ago ——"

"I put it all up to Deems," she burst out astoundingly. "He has planned the thing. It seems that in February of this year in Buffalo one S. Haldane obtained a license to marry a certain Judith Walker. The said S. Haldane was on the following day arrested and the license never used, S. Haldane slipping his bond and escaping to Canada. Through Deems' brother—a high political boss in Buffalo—a certain careful alteration has been made in this record; so that S. Haldane's license will now be our license. Brother Deems, a justice of the peace, will marry us to-morrow, and the record of the marriage be made to appear as of February 12th instead of May 12th. . . . You are thinking this is sinful. . . ."

The thought had not occurred to him. "We must make the detour," he found himself saying, "to reach the straight road."

She said: "On the day after to-morrow I sail for Europe with my father." He stared wonderingly at her. "While I am gone the rumor of our marriage will be carefully brought out. When I return we will acknowledge it, saying secrecy was necessary because of my father's health."

He looked out across the ragged sky-line of stacks and penthouses, of roofs dirty and unrepaired, of roofs copper-bordered and boastfully

tiled, of a thousand windows which were symbols for persons—for persons typing, for persons dictating, persons computing, writing checks, sleeping, bathing—a myriad of busy, plotting, scheming organisms. The city was a ruthless thing, towering menacing above them all, holding over them disaster insecurely balanced.

One's life seemed a game always against odds. One never won. He must compromise—taking half, possessing happiness by unbelievable threads of coincidence, possessing it momentarily, losing it when it seemed secure, hoping impotently for its eventual return.

As usual she was with him for but a moment—in another to be gone. His spirit sank. A promise to return was so slender against the vicious tide of circumstance. But she was close to him. . . . She was resting in his arms, strands of her hair against his sleeve, a round arm about him. Unexpectedly he was happy, strong, exulting. His lips touched her face.

"Simon, don-n't," she whispered,—without moving.

